IDENTIFYING AND SOLVING THE REAL PROBLEMS
FACING THE INTEGRATED DISABILITY
EVALUATION SYSTEM (IDES)

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KENNETH J. MORTIMER, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
M.H.A., Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, Missouri, 2007
M.S.W., Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri, 2007
B.A., Ohio Northern University, Ada, Ohio, 2003

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
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The Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) represents a significant interagency collaboration between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense. Despite significant effort on the part of both agencies, efforts to help the system meet its timeliness goals have met with limited success. This thesis seeks to identify and solve the real problems facing IDES. To do so, it studies three areas: systems, problem formulation and organizational culture. It uses qualitative and quantitative tools to analyze the problems facing IDES. The study results suggest that IDES may have been developed without a full appreciation of the complexity of the disability evaluation problem, with a process driven focus reflecting organizational cultures that value stability and order. Research thus suggests that IDES measures do not reflect the complex nature of the disability evaluation problem. The thesis concludes with ideas for building adaptability into IDES by clarifying ownership, adapting IDES systems, and improving performance standards.

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Name of Candidate: Kenneth J. Mortimer

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Approved by:

_____, Thesis Committee Chair
Bill J. McCollum, Ed.D.

_____, Member
Ralph O. Doughty, Ph.D.

_____, Member
Matthew J. Bonnot, M.A.

Accepted this 14th day of June 2013 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

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statement.)

ABSTRACT

IDENTIFYING AND SOLVING THE REAL PROBLEMS FACING THE
INTEGRATED DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM (IDES), by Kenneth J.
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The Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) represents a significant interagency
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solve the real problems facing IDES. To do so, it studies three areas: systems, problem
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performance standards.

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ACRONYMS

AES	VA All-Employee Survey
BDD	Benefits Delivery at Discharge
CAS	Complex Adaptive Systems
CVF	Competing Values Framework
DES	Disability Evaluation System
DoD	Department of Defense
DRAS	Disability Rating Activity Site
DTM	Directive-Type Memorandum
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GWoT	Global War on Terror
IDES	Integrated Disability Evaluation System
MEB	Medical Evaluation Board
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MTF	Military Treatment Facility
NCA	National Cemetary Administration
OCAI	Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
PEB	Physical Evaluation Board
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VACO	Veterans Affairs Central Office
VAMC	Veterans Affairs Medical Center
VBA	Veterans Benefits Administration

VBA CO   Veterans Benefits Administration Central Office

VHA   Veterans Health Administration

VHA CO   Veterans Health Administration Central Office

VISN   Veterans Integrated Service Network

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Because our Service members and Veterans represent the continuity between our
Departments, DoD and VA must be collaborative, attentive and cooperative.
Little of what we do in VA originates in VA; much of what we do originates in
DoD. This means that we, in VA, must be aware, agile and fully capable of caring
for those "who have borne the battle" and their families and survivors, long after
the guns have fallen silent.
— Eric K. Shinseki, *Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee
and the House Committee on Veterans Affairs*

To fulfill the sacred responsibility of caring for those who have fought for our
country, close and effective collaboration between DoD and VA is essential.
While there is no doubt that DoD and VA are working more closely than ever
before, it is also clear that we need to reach an even deeper level of cooperation to
better meet the needs of those who have served our nation in uniform, especially
our wounded warriors.
— Leon E. Panetta, *Testimony before the House Armed Services
Committee and the House Committee on Veterans Affairs*

These two quotes, given in testimony before a joint session of the House Armed

Services and Veterans Affairs Committees, illustrate an imperative for both the

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD). That

imperative is interagency collaboration. Secretaries Shinseki and Panetta affirmed

strongly that VA and DoD must work together to meet the needs of returning Service

Members and Veterans. For DoD, interagency collaboration is nothing new. Indeed, joint

doctrine provides guidance on integrating interagency, intergovernmental and

nongovernment entities into joint operations (DoD 2006b). Joint doctrine recognizes the

importance of interagency partners in joint operations (DoD 2006a, III-4) and joint

planning (DoD 2011). US Army doctrine also affirms the relevance of Army integration

with interagency partners (Department of the Army 2012a). The interagency sector is

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relevant with respect to planning (Keyes 2008), information sharing (Kind and Burton 2005), and stability/phase IV operations (Rogan 2010; Schaubelt 2005; Szayna, Eaton, and Richardson 2007). For VA, interagency collaboration has grown into a vital part of agency operations. Since 2008, VA has collaborated with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to eliminate homelessness among Veterans (Department of Housing and Urban Development 2012). VA also collaborates with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in areas such as medical research (VA n.d.) and telemedicine (Department of Health and Human Services 2012).

In 2002, VA and DoD established a Joint Executive Council to facilitate planning (VA and DoD Joint Executive Council 2009b). After the findings of several reviews following media reports illustrating poor conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, VA and DoD created a Senior Oversight Committee to coordinate efforts to implement review recommendations. This committee established eight lines of effort as part of this process. (GAO 2012c). Figure 1 illustrates the eight lines of action undertaken by the Senior Oversight Committee. One of the principal VA/DoD interagency lines of action is the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). IDES was developed at least in part as a result of reports indicating that the previous Disability Evaluation System (DES) possessed significant problems. The IDES pilot represented a solution to the problem of effectively delivering military and Veterans disability benefits to Service Members prior to their separation. Rather than have Service Members work through a sequential process of military disability assessment and adjudication, discharge and then Veterans disability assessment and adjudication, the IDES pilot merged the two systems into a single process. This process, administered jointly by the DoD and the VA would

create a "transparent, consistent, and expeditious disability evaluation process" (U.S.

Senate 2012b).
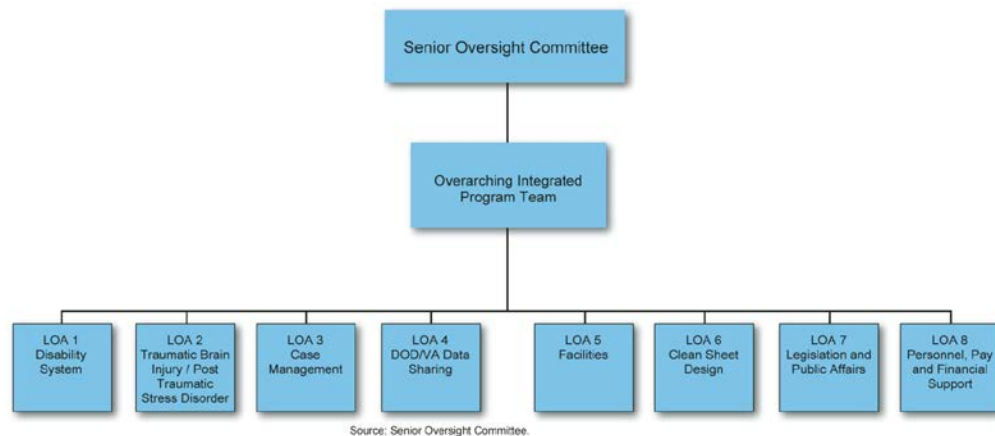
Figure 1.   Senior Oversight Committee Lines of Action

Source: United States Government Accountability Office, *Recovering Service Members and Veterans: Sustained Leadership Attention and Systematic Oversight Needed to Resolve Persistent Problems Affecting Care and Benefits* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012), 9.

In spite of significant oversight and investment at the highest levels of both

organizations, IDES has struggled to achieve its performance targets. Based on GAO

analysis, IDES expansion has led to dramatically increased caseload. During FY11, the

DoD expanded IDES by bringing the system to all 112 military treatment facilities

worldwide (GAO 2012a, 6). This expansion fueled growth in enrollment of cases. In

FY11, 18,651 cases were enrolled in IDES compared to 9,713 in FY10. Further, the

completion time for cases has increased since the inception of IDES. In FY11, the

processing time for Active forces and Reserve forces was 394 days and 420 days

respectively; both well above the performance goal of 295 days for Active forces and 305

days for Reserve forces. This timeliness goal says little for the efficiency, consistency and equitability of the system.

IDES further sits at the nexus of political and social phenomena. As an issue involving disability benefits and compensation for Service Members, it generates interest from both the United States Congress, Veterans Service Organizations and Wounded Warrior advocacy groups. Because public appreciation of Service Member contribution to national defense is high, failure on the part of IDES to meet the needs of Service Members could undermine public confidence in the military services and the VA. Regardless of the circumstances behind the Service Member's injury, he or she may still be perceived as a "Wounded Warrior." Further, effective benefit delivery is one way that VA builds and maintains public support for the agency. Ultimately, perceived lack of coordination between the Departments creates dissatisfaction in the public, leading to negative downstream effects for both agencies, at least with regard to the public narrative (Maze 2012). These complex factors place IDES in an operational environment beyond the agencies themselves.

In spite of the importance to the partnered agencies and the larger political and social contexts of the system, efforts to improve IDES, at least through FY2011, seem to have failed to help bring the program up to desired standards. Thus, the primary research question of this thesis asks, "what are the real problems affecting IDES performance?"

In order to answer this question, this research will pursue three lines of effort in the form of secondary research questions. The first set of questions will examine the systems underlying IDES. It will ask: "who owns IDES;" "how is IDES currently

structured;" "where are the shortfalls within IDES;" and "what solutions have DoD and VA leaders put forward to improve IDES to this point?"

The second line of effort will study the definition of disability evaluation problem from the perspective of the different actors involved. The second set of questions asks: "how is the IDES problem framed and defined;" "what are the current IDES goals and objectives;" and "how well do IDES goals and objectives address the problem?"

The final line of effort seeks to understand the cultures and values at play in IDES. It will inquire: "how are DoD and VA cultures defined;" "how visible are DoD and VA organizational cultures in IDES;" "how have DoD and VA cultural interests, incentives, goals and values influenced approaches to improving IDES;" and "are the current metrics reflective of DoD and VA values?" Based on analysis from these three lines of effort, the author will suggest potential solutions for consideration by DoD and VA leaders along with areas for future research to improve IDES.

Chapter 2 of this thesis explores the scholarly literature around interagency collaboration, systems theory, problem formulation, organizational culture and the events leading to the development of IDES. It will provide the theoretical underpinnings for some of the concepts addressed in the thesis and introduce the reader to the concepts used throughout the thesis. Chapter 3 describes the methods used to answer the research questions answered in this thesis. Chapter 4 applies the methodology described in chapter 3 to answer the research questions. These answers feed the conclusions and recommendations put forward in chapter 5.

This thesis views IDES as a challenging interagency collaboration. It will study the design and implementation of IDES, the problem it seeks to solve, and the

organizational cultures at play within the collaboration in order to frame the problems

facing IDES. It will consider how present solutions may or may not appropriately address

problems facing IDES and will attempt to propose adaptive solutions to the system. This

thesis will not attempt to assess the value of efforts expended thus far to improve IDES. It

will also not offer judgments as to the value of the existing IDES structure or its

evolution from pilot to department-wide standard. While solutions put forward may

challenge the current structure, these solutions should be viewed as attempts to solve

problems within IDES, and not as challenges to the work accomplished thus far. Further,

this thesis will not examine similar VA/DoD collaborations, such as VA/DoD facilities,

sharing agreements or the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) system. While the

assessments and considerations within this thesis may elucidate ways to improve those

collaborations, this thesis is confined strictly to IDES. This author acknowledges that the

lines of effort pursued in this thesis do not represent all of the possible issue areas facing

IDES. It is quite possible that additional problems could have a more significant effect on

the process. This author contends, however, that the lines of effort of systems, problem

formulation and organizational culture represent some of the most likely sources of

problems in an interagency collaboration. This thesis will help support or undermine this

assertion, and provide fruit for future study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As this thesis seeks to identify the real problem affecting IDES performance, it

will begin by exploring literature relevant to interagency collaboration and the three

major lines of effort: systems, problem formulation and organizational culture. This will

provide a backdrop against which to conduct analyses and frame findings in each area.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the theories surrounding interagency

collaboration in order to frame how organizations work together. Next, it takes up a

discussion of systems theory, with an emphasis on Complex Adaptive Systems. In doing

so, it will describe how various types of systems operate and how change can occur

within systems. After discussing systems, the chapter provides a discussion of problems,

wherein it lays out different types of problems and approaches to problem solving. After

discussing problems, the author presents various approaches to framing organizational

culture and an initial discussion of DoD and VA cultures. Finally, this literature review

will explore the events and circumstances leading to development of IDES.

Interagency Collaboration

Theorist and public management scholar Eugene Bardach defines collaboration as

"activities by agencies intended to increase public value by having agencies work

together rather than separately" (Bardach 1998, 17). Elaborating on this definition, he

notes that the type of work being done is not relevant, but it is more important that the

activities increase public value through the "optimal combination of specialization and

integration" (Bardach 1998, 10). This implies that some form of adaptation must take place on the part of both agencies in order to achieve collaborative success. He notes also that in order to effectively take advantage of opportunities to add value through collaboration, agencies must use personnel and financial resources, design and manage and effective operating systems (Systems), reach consensus on collaborative goals (Problems), create and maintain an effective culture (Culture) and secure the consent of elected officials (Bardach 1998, 18). Bardach (2001) also argues that interagency collaborations have two major sub-processes underpinning it. The first is a "craftsman" process by which a large number of actors participate both in developing the collaboration and as resources for others who build individual portions of the collaborative. In this process, different aspects of collaborative capability (such as trust, intellectual capital, communication networks, and operating subsystems) form and mutually reinforce in what Bardach refers to as "platforming" (Bardach 2001, 152-153). Also at work is an evolutionary process. In this process, Bardach notes that "various capabilities and opportunities that contribute to the overall result do and do not emerge from the interaction of the craftsmen and in turn condition the emergence of still other capacities and opportunities" (Bardach 2001, 163). It highlights that not only do interagency collaborations result from adaptations based on shared opportunity, but they also rely on continuous adaptation in order to generate new approaches and thus further work by the craftsmen in a reinforcing cycle.

In describing his Craftsmanship theory, Bardach (1998) lays out the idea of interagency collaborative capacity (ICC). ICC consists of both the formal agreements between agencies on factors such as personnel, budgets, equipment, space and other

resources. He also delves into the subjective aspects of ICC, such as beliefs around the legitimacy of collaboration, willingness to act in support of the collaboration, and the trust that other parties will fulfill their end of the agreement. He notes that this capacity can grow and vary according to the nature of the problem, can flex according the needed solution, and can be measured. He also asserts that the relative ICC could be further linked to the cultures and perspectives of the various agencies involved in the collaboration.

Bardach discusses several other models of interagency collaboration. He notes their approaches tend to explain behavior, rather than its capacity, as in the craftsmanship model. Resource dependence argues that collaboration is effectively a quid pro quo relationship (Van de Ven and Walker 1984), wherein collaborating entities work together for their own interest rather than value-creation for the end consumer (1998, 23-24). In cases where value-creation is the goal, Bardach argues that participants are cognizant of their relative weakness and interdependencies, but attempt to ensure all participants realize some benefit with respect to resources than they might otherwise. He also highlights Network Theory. This theory posits the formation of webs of relationships that build and dissolve links quickly. Actors in the network seek to maximize their benefit while minimize the ability of others to exploit their positions in the Network. He highlights two types of Networks which are relevant to interagency collaborations: implementing networks and interagency production networks (Van de Ven and Walker 1984, 26).

Implementing networks are groups of individuals that run day-to-day operations within a system designed by partnered organizations (Van de Ven and Walker 1984, 26).

The practical organization of these groups varies, and can range from highly structured entities with close coordination to loose affiliations of small groups of actors who troubleshoot well-established systems to planning groups working at the front end of a new process (Van de Ven and Walker 1984, 26-27). Interagency production networks, by contrast, consist of relationships rather than individuals. These relationships tend to be formalized in memoranda of understanding or contracts, or at the very least the informal commitments of senior leaders. Such relationships can include the producer/customer relationship and the service provider/client relationship. He further notes that interagency production networks rely heavily on some sort of leadership role (Van de Ven and Walker 1984, 27).

Koschmann, Kuhn, and Pfarrer (2012) argue that the value of cross-sector partnerships add value based on their ability to act, rather than the ability to connect mutually-interested parties. The particular advantage is that they generate a collective agency, which the authors describe as the ability to influence outcomes beyond the capacity of individual actors. They note, as part of a communicative framework for generating action, the importance of co-orientation (wherein agents align their action towards a common goal through iterative dialogue). They note that texts, such as mission statements, policy documents, reports and other written publications, serve to highlight this co-orientation by providing the concrete tools for deriving unity, continuity and value (Koschmann, Kuhn, and Pfarrer 2012, 335-336). The iterative cycles of textual development, including the conflicts and negotiations associated with it, create a trajectory for the partnership. The authors note the importance not only of having a broad

array of constituents at the table, but also ensure that they contribute meaningfully to the process of co-orientation and developing a trajectory.

This article highlights the importance not only of collaborative action in support of process, but also connection in developing the narrative that guides the collaboration. Should one side dominate ownership in the beginning of the collaboration and "own" the process early on, it becomes more difficult to create alignment and legitimacy. One can apply the cross-sector partnership approach to interagency collaborations, as well, since the agencies involved possess not only their own interests, but often distinct legal (e.g., Title 10 vs. Title 38) and cultural approaches to collaboration that have to be adapted and used in order to generate co-orientation and develop a narrative that can influence the support of other stakeholders, including the public and legislators.

<u>Systems</u>

Broadly speaking, systems represent the milieu through which inputs become outputs. These may be raw materials, physical energy and processing machinery in a production system: food, enzymes, electrical impulses and physiological processes in the human body or complex social dynamics, relationships, and interactions in a social system or culture (Wilson and Holt 2001). Many theories exist regarding how systems operate. However, with respect to organizations and their operations, three theories seem applicable: scientific management theory, general systems theory, and complexity theory. Scientific management theory (Taylor 1911) seeks to maximize efficiency and throughput in order to find the best way to accomplish a particular task. This approach recognizes a process as a closed system with few or no inputs from the outside. Once management finds the best way, it should enforce that standard method throughout the

organization. In effect, this theory seeks to reduce or eliminate tension and complexity in the system so that it operates with minimal interference. This reductionist theory, like the scientific approach upon which it is based, views the organization and its various processes in a linear fashion with simple cause and effect solutions to create and enforce order and stability (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001). In contrast, general systems theory (GST) viewed systems as constructed of interacting and interrelating activities and actors. From an organizational perspective, Katz and Kahn (1978) note that organizations and their processes share many of the characteristics of an open system, which interacts not only within itself, but also imports energy from its environment. Such systems maintain themselves by gathering input from the environment and adjusting itself in order to counter negative environmental factors. These systems tend to build stronger internal structures as the diversity required by the environment forces them towards differentiation and greater specialization of the parts.

Complexity theory takes GST a step further by arguing that systems exist as the product of interactions between individual actors (e.g. a micro-system). As these micro-systems interact throughout a body like an organization, they form aggregates (combinations of systems) and meta-aggregates (combinations of aggregates). Higher level dynamics occur as a result of the interactions at the individual level. Individuals, groups, systems, and aggregates interact within the larger structures of the organization and with the outside environment. The interaction and interdependence of these entities, in turn, generates a degree of correlation. This correlation creates a common understanding between the individuals and builds stability within the larger system (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001). This system of highly interactive, interrelated and

interdependent individuals which forms the basis of complexity theory is the Complex

Adaptive System (CAS). Such systems may never reach the desired equilibrium because

they are in a constant state of emergent flux and change (Schneider and Somers 2006). In

part this seems to be a result of the freedom of the individual agents to act in

unpredictable ways that change the context for other agents (Greenhalgh and Plsek 2001).

Some examples of Complex Adaptive Systems can include an immune system, a

financial market, or a group of humans (e.g., a church, a start-up, or a city as described by

Lichtenstein and Plowman (2009)).

It may also be relevant to consider the difference between a system that is

complex and one that is simply complicated. Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey (2007)

point out that complicated systems can be described in terms of their constituent parts and

can be understood simply by analyzing the parts. In complex systems, one must

understand the interactions within the system (between the parts of the system) and the

system and its surrounding environment. Snowden and Boone (2007) note that in

complicated contexts (systems) there are multiple answers to problems with cause-and-

effect solutions, even though they may not be readily apparent. This is due, in part, to the

static nature of the system. Complex contexts (systems) on the other hand cannot be

broken down to constituent parts and do not possess a static nature.

Considering the nature of interagency collaborations as described earlier in this

chapter, the view of such collaborations as Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) seems

reasonable. Both Craftsmanship and Network theories view the collaborating actors who

form and re-form relationships, interaction patterns and rules of engagement while

managing resource constraints and mitigating disruption to their own systems.

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Furthermore, interagency theories view collaboration as a source of emergent ideas and new processes that enable the distinct agencies to achieve something outside of their own capacity by effectively increasing the complexity of their own meta-aggregate in order to pull in new systems. Similarly, Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey describe CAS as "neural-like networks of interacting, interdependent agents who are bonded in a cooperative dynamic by common goal, outlook, need, etc. They are changeable structures with multiple, overlapping hierarchies, and like the individuals that comprise them, CAS are linked with one another in a dynamic, interactive network" (2007, 299). In this case, the interagency collaborations share the characteristics of interdependent individuals, common goals and needs, overlapping hierarchies and dynamic networks. Such collaborations also interact with the environment outside of them, and face pressures from a variety of sources to get results. Thus, of the three types of systems described earlier, interagency collaborations should best be viewed as Complex Adaptive Systems.

Because CAS stand on a network of interacting individuals, it is worthwhile to consider the dynamics of those networks. In particular, one must think about the contexts and mechanisms of the network. Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey (2007) state that contexts refer to the environment in which the interactions occur, while mechanisms are the patterns of behavior that produce the complex outcomes. Contexts include not only the relationships, conflicting constraints, relationships, rules of engagement and the overall operating environment Mechanism, on the other hand, largely turn on behaviors that increase or decrease the stability of the network and the flow of information. Behaviors and information allow for the emergence of new relationships, patterns of behavior and ideas. These, in turn, affect other aspects of the system, conflict with or

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support other ideas and processes, force adaptation and ultimately increase the complexity of the system (Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey 2007). Another important part of the networks underlying the CAS is tension. Tension exists a by-product of the interaction of the agents within the CAS when the knowledge-bases and capabilities of the agents conflict. Tension forces adaptation in the agents in order to adapt to new information, develop new capabilities or create novel solutions to problems. Tension can also exist outside of a system as when external resource constraints force change within a system (Lichtenstein et al. 2006; Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey 2007).

As agents interact within the contexts, mechanisms and tensions of the CAS network, they create "autocatalytic" interactions (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001). These are interactions that produce actions without a mediator such as a leader to start or maintain the reaction. They are self-sustaining and replicating. Holland (1995), however, notes that catalysts form, sometimes unbidden, in the system. He refers to these catalysts as "tags." As Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001) note, they do not create dynamics themselves, but emerge as a consequence of the interaction. The tags impact social behavior and can form the path on which future interactions occur or frame the direction of the outputs of those interactions. They also, as Boal and Schultz (2007) point out, serve as differentiators within organizations and systems. As agents interact more with some agents more than others, tags emerge which shape informal structures. These help guide what behaviors and adjustments can occur. For example, frequent interaction can create mutual accommodations between two agents that help improve efficiency for both agents. Such accommodations may not exist in other, more distant working relationships. Contexts may also form tags, as actors within a given meta-aggregate (e.g., VHA, or a military

service such as the Army) form a frame of reference around a behavior. As this author will show later, tags at this level share many similarities to the elements of organizational culture described by Edgar Schein.

Problem Formulation

One view of challenges that face organizations comes from scholar Robert Heifetz. He notes that leaders face two categories of problems: technical problems and adaptive problems (London 1995). Leaders solve technical problems using expertise and good management. These problems generally have known solutions and generally require only commitment of resources and leadership oversight of implementation (Heifetz, Kania, and Kramer 1994). In contrast, adaptive problems require innovation and learning (London 1995). Adaptive problems are vague, have no easy solutions and transcend the ability of any one individual (or organization) to fix (Heifetz, Kania, and Kramer 1994). Table 1 illustrates some of the differences in leadership roles when facing technical and adaptive problems.

Table 1.	Leadership Roles in Solving Technical and Adaptive Problems	
Leader Responsibility	Type of Problem	
	Technical	Adaptive
Direction	Define the problem(s) and provide solutions	Identify the adaptive challenge and frame key questions and issues
Protection	Shield the organization from external threats	Let the organization feel external pressures within a range it can stand
Orientation	Clarify roles and responsibilities	Challenge current roles and resist pressure to define new roles quickly
Managing Conflict	Restore order	Expose conflict or let it emerge
Shaping Norms	Maintain norms	Challenge unproductive norms

*Source:*Ronald Heifetz and Donald Laurie, "The Work of Leadership," *Harvard Business Review* (1997): 128.

Heifetz also notes that organizations must do adaptive work when deeply held values come under attack or when they face systemic problems with no ready answers (Heifetz and Laurie 1997). Heifetz suggests that leaders of companies facing adaptive problems must look to their people for solutions, rather than the executive suite. They must also help stimulate their employees to adapt and form new roles, relationships, and approaches to work (Heifetz and Laurie 1997).

Within the field of psychology, adaptive problem solving involves problem-definition and formulation, generation of alternative approaches, decision-making, and solution implementation (Bell and D'Zurilla 2009). In management, adaptive problem-solving involves identifying a problem, formulating alternative approaches to meeting problem-focused goals and objectives, deciding on and implementing a solution and using the outcome of that solution to generate new solutions in an iterative fashion (Department of the Interior n.d.). In light of the various definitions of adaptive problems,

the presence of adaptive problems in IDES would suggest that optimizing IDES requires not only novel solutions, but also novel approaches to arriving at those solutions. Generating these solutions will require clear problem definition (e.g., framing the adaptive challenge). It also requires a thorough investigation of the IDES systems (e.g., roles and responsibilities) and an understanding of the culture and values of the agents involved (e.g., the norms at play).

Adaptive problems lack technical solutions and require some significant (and perhaps) fundamental change in how the organization does business. Heifetz, Grashaw, and Linsky (2009) use the example of an individual who has survived a heart attack. While the emergency has passed, the reality of the situation shows that without a significant change in lifestyle, another heart attack could be right around the corner. They argue that organizations facing analogous realities can either "hunker down or press 'reset'" (Heifetz, Grashaw, and Linsky 2009, 64). These authors argue that leaders who practice adaptive leadership choose to use the current crisis to make targeted changes that prepare for future challenges. By breaking through loyalties to existing systems, encouraging experimentation, accepting and managing uncertainty and fostering solutions throughout the organization, adaptive leaders create organizations that emerge from crises transformed. Tatsou (2002), writing about the Japanese health care system, argues that health care systems are adaptive systems beset by rapid change and unpredictability. He notes that leadership must manage the environment in which the changes occur. Ford (2009) further argues that complex leadership is a new core competency for healthcare leaders.

Derived from Complexity Theory and the CAS, Complexity Leadership Theory provides insight into how leaders can help their organizations solve problems, be they adaptive or technical. Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey (2007) argue that leaders must set the conditions that foster complex networks and manage the connection between formal (e.g., administrative) and adaptive (bottom-up) structures. With respect to fostering complex networks, the authors argue that leaders must create strong interactions across the organization or system (e.g., IDES) to allow dynamic connections to form and to facilitate self-organization. They point to concepts such as open-architecture and self-directed teams as examples of formal structures which facilitate informal interaction. They also encourage greater interdependence. They note that as interdependence increases, pressure to coordinate effectively also increases. They argue that leaders can encourage interdependence by building integrated and interactive workgroups. Military doctrine further encourages joint interdependence by noting that services must rely on one another's capabilities, as in the realm of sustainment, and must work together to function effectively (Department of the Army 2012b).

Marion and Uhl-Bien also recommend the use of creative tension to drive adaptation. Such adaptation, however, should not necessarily be imposed from above, but rather the strategic leaders allow for experimentation in light of the tension in order to see what adaptive patterns arise as a result (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001). These three recommendations help networks not only grow, but also allow participant agents to craft new interactions within the system (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001). The authors also argue that leaders of CAS should work to mitigate the work to protect the CAS from top-down pressures and build structures that encourage creativity and adaptability and direct

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resources in such a manner as to provide incentives for novel approaches to problem solving. This does not mean that leaders should reject planning or be entirely laissez-faire. Rather, it means establishing appropriate limits for creativity (see also Mumford et al. 2008). While not restricting creativity, leadership should work to help ensure that innovation and creative adaptation spread throughout their organizations. Such leaders must, they contend, exercise judgment as to what innovations can and should be spread throughout their organization while also fostering the linkages that support the spread of good ideas. Having considered how systems, problem formulation and leadership guide organizational approaches to problem solving, it may be worth considering the role of organizational culture as part of the context for Complex Adaptive Systems and problem solving.

<p style="text-align:center">Organizational Culture</p>

Grasping the role of systems and organizational understanding of the problems organizations solves is helpful. IDES, in particular, seems to serve as a reflection of the organizational cultures of both DoD and VA. The organizational cultures of both VA and DoD impact how they frame problems and formulate solutions (or new systems) to both technical and adaptive problems. The study of organizational culture is not new. In 1973, John D. Rockefeller III pointed out the presence of unique logic within organizations (Pierce 2010, 19). Research indicates organizational culture is a relevant factor to consider when thinking about how a given company or government agency works, as it affects performance (Aydin and Ceylan 2009; Hajjar 2005; Vestal, Fralicx, and Spreier 1997), patient safety (Clarke 2006), and organizational change/improvement (Aronowitz 2007; Cameron and Quinn 2011; Carpenter 2006; Drylie 2012; Hall, Sigford, and Sayer

2009; Morrill 1991; Stevens 1991). In addition to understanding culture, the literature is ripe with recommendations for changing cultures in order to achieve desired outcomes (Bradshaw 2000; Hildner 2007; Larson 2002; McAlearney et al 2005, Ray and Goppelt 2011, Smollen and Sayers 2009). Over time, several competing theories exist to categorize and help one understand the culture of a given organization. This thesis highlights two major approaches; that of Edgar Schein and the Competing Values Framework (CVF) of Cameron and Quinn.

<div align="center">Edgar Schein</div>

MIT Management professor Edgar Schein defined organizational culture as: "A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein 1992, 12). Schein defines three levels of organizational culture: artifacts, espoused values and underlying assumptions (Schein 1992, 17). He notes that artifacts include "all the phenomena that one sees, hears and feels when one encounters a new group with an unfamiliar culture" (Schein 1992, 17). They are, however, difficult to decipher because their meaning exists in the context of the culture itself (Schein 1992, 18). Thus, it is only exposure to the deeper aspects of the culture that allows one to assign meaning to the artifacts themselves.

The next level of culture in Schein's model is espoused values. These are the organizations' stated or implicit beliefs on how things should be as opposed to how they are (Schein 1992, 19). Organizations test values to see if they generate positive outcomes for the group. If so, they become deeper and deeper parts of the organization until they

become shared assumptions. Some stated values can, however, conflict with the underlying assumptions of the group leading to incongruence between what we say we believe and what we actually believe (Schein 1992, 19-21). This leads to the deepest level of culture: basic assumptions.

Basic assumptions are "so strongly held in a group, [that] members will find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable" (Schein 1992, 22). They are the result of values that consistently prove beneficial to the organization and are therefore worthy of guiding behavior in other areas. When members hold assumptions deeply, they may seek to "fit" situations or new values into their existing cognitive frame. When the situations or new values do not fit, the result is stress and anxiety (Schein 1992, 23).

Leaders confronting an unfamiliar culture can, in their earnestness to help the organization evolve, face challenges of integrating into the body and must work through the culture to achieve results (Schein 1999). Artifacts, espoused values and basic assumptions seem to act as tags within the organization as they help guide behavior within the system in a particular direction, catalyzing some systems and not others. Those behaviors, interactions and micro-systems supported by the tags of organizational culture are adopted by other agents in the organization. Those that do not conform, on the other hand, do not receive auto-catalysis. However, leadership can force adoption using positional power, but at the risk of creating stress and anxiety within the organization. In addressing collaborative efforts between two agencies with distinct cultures (tags), Schein notes that in the case of acquisitions, mergers and joint ventures it is useful to begin dialogue and send members across cultural borders to learn how and why the other company behaves the way it does (Schein 1999, 173-184). This is a long process and

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requires leaders to put forth substantial effort to fully comprehend and appreciate the basic underlying assumptions operating within the other culture.

Schein's model appears as an excellent tool for those working within an organization (e.g., new leaders) and those facing collaborative efforts with long time horizons and a high degree of integration. However, interagency operations do not possess the same level of tight integration a merger or acquisition might. Thus, Schein's model might be most applicable for long-term joint ventures such as those faced by VA and DoD staff in integrated Federal Health Care Centers. At the planning stage, a model that uses distinct categories might be better for the operational leader facing the early stages of a new planning effort.

The Competing Values Framework

Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn offer such a model in their "Competing Values Framework" (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). The CVFbuilds on research into organizational effectiveness to identify dimensions of criteria that differentiate organizations (Quinn and Rohrbaugh 1983). From an analysis of thirty-nine effectiveness indicators, two distinct dimensions emerged (Gerras, Wong, and Allen 2008). The first dimension addresses organizational approaches to change. On one side of the continuum are those organizations that value flexibility and discretion. These organizations view themselves as effective if they are constantly changing and constantly developing new products (Cameron and Quinn 2011). Companies on the other end of the spectrum view effectiveness as a function of stability and predictability. These organizations value long-term success and "staying power in both designs and outputs" (Cameron and Quinn 2011, 38). The second dimension considers organizational focus and degree of integration.

Companies on one end of the continuum value internal harmony and strong integration, while those on the other end focus outside of themselves and tend towards less integration (Cameron and Quinn 2011, 38-39). Cameron and Quinn use an instrument called the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) to diagnose the culture of a given organization by fitting the organization along these two dimensions (2011, 28-33).

Cameron and Quinn then combine these two dimensions to create four distinct organizational culture typologies. The first is the Hierarchy (Control) Culture. This culture values stability and integration. Standardized procedures, formal policies, efficiency-focus, and bureaucratic structures tend to characterize these organizations. As such, leaders in these organizations are strong organizers with a focus on uniformity. In general, these organizations have a controlling environment (Cameron and Quinn 2011). Cameron and Quinn posit that government agencies provide prototypical examples of this category of culture.

The next type of culture is the Market (Compete) Culture. This culture emphasizes stability with an external focus. They seek results against external competition. They see the market as invariably hostile and thus drive towards productivity and the meeting of goals and targets (Davis 2010; Paparone 2003).

The third type of culture identified was the Clan (Collaborate) Culture. This type of organization values integration and teamwork while also encouraging flexibility and innovation (Cameron and Quinn, 2011; Paparone, 2003). Cameron and Quinn identify Pixar as one example of a clan culture. Pixar leverages a tight-knit social structure to help

drive the innovation of its animators in order to create new and unique methods around animation.

The final class of culture is the Adhocracy (Create) Culture. Adhocracy cultures thrive on risk-taking, individual entrepreneurship and broad vision to achieve their goals. Cameron and Quinn (2011, 51) note that they may lack an organizational chart and come together around a shared vision or desire for innovation. Such organizations are constantly changing in order to put out new products fast. Cameron and Quinn point out Google as one example of an organization with this culture.

Gerras, Wong, and Allen (2008) argue that Cameron and Quinn's model offers two benefits to individuals seeking to diagnose and understand the culture of the Army which can aid in understanding DoD culture. First, the model addresses some of the paradoxical approaches inherent in the organization. For example, the concept of Mission Command (Department Of The Army 2012a) emphasizes flexibility and discretion, but in the context of stability and control. Secondly, Quinn and Cameron's OCAI allows for quantitative research to study Army culture (Gerras, Wong, and Allen 2008, 4). Indeed, both Davis (2010) and Schupbach (2009) use the OCAI to assess organizational culture within the Army. However, the Competing Values Framework, with its emphasis on diagnosing culture and changing it, says very little about how two cultures might interact based on their inherent similarities or differences. Having discussed models of organizational culture, it may now be profitable to consider the literature on the organizational cultures of DoD and VA.

DoD Culture

Historian Williamson Murray (1999) points out that military culture could be among the most important factors in supporting military innovation and preparing for future conflicts. He further notes that elements within militaries will possess unique subcultures depending on their mission and traditions. While Taylor (2011) notes that all Services share a common characteristic of trust between members and mutual loyalty, Snider (1999), drawing on Schein's approach notes several elements of broader military culture, including discipline, professional ethos, ceremony and etiquette, and esprit de corps.

He also, however, argues that the subcultures of the various military services are different. The US Air Force, he argues, naturally sees air power as the most effective tool in the US arsenal. As a result, the Air Force emphasizes technological development and investment in future technology. In contrast, Snider argues that naval culture derives from traditions associated with being at sea and out of contact for long periods of time along with the importance on sea lanes for trade and economic prosperity. Snider also points out the presence of distinct subcultures within the services themselves. Snider suggests that while Goldwater-Nichols may have reorganized the force and created increased jointness and led to joint doctrine, distinct service cultures, professional subcultures and even doctrine still create separations between the services.

Hillen (1999) finds a difference between military and civil culture that pulls the military in competing directions. He notes that the military must decide how to both accommodate changing civilian culture while also maintaining hierarchical approaches

that separate the military and preserve its uniqueness. Preserving the uniqueness of military culture likely includes maintaining its decidedly functional subcultures.

Given the unique service subcultures that characterize DoD culture at large and the role of transformative solutions in meeting adaptive problems, it may be worthwhile to consider how DoD approaches transformation. Prior to 9/11 and the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, Krepinevich (2000) perceived a "gradualist" approach to transformation. This approach, he argued, lacked a sense of urgency, stability in leading senior officer roles (due to short tenures) impractical methodologies for predicting future requirements, and a planning process driven by resource allocation problems. Krepinevich states that "absent a strong external shock, surmounting the barriers will prove a long and arduous process" (Krepinevich 2000, 101).

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan provided the shock Krepinevich discussed. McMaster (2008), reviewing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan several years into the conflicts, argues that the military failed to transform its approach in spite of practical considerations to the contrary. Brigadier Nigel Aylwin-Foster of the British Army, writing in 2005, described the US Army with which he served in Iraq as having "a hierarchically conscious command ethos, which encouraged centralization, and conversely discouraged low level initiative or innovation even when senior commanders stressed the need for them" (Alywin-Foster 2005, 7). This suggests that at least in the Army at the time, there was little impetus to transform. However, Alywin-Foster's argument does not seem to hold true today as the Army has placed considerable effort into transformation, with emphasis on real-time

learning tools such as the Center for Army Lessons Learned (Foley, Griffin, and

McCartney 2011).

Rotmann, Tohn, and Wharton (2009) note that the US military underwent a

significant struggle in the transformation to counter-insurgency tactics. They argue that

this change was driven by junior officer responses to conditions on the ground and senior

leader-driven changes to doctrine and culture. The bottom-up changes, they argue, were

technical changes that did not require a changing in fundamental operational approach.

The translation of these technical solutions, however, received aid from the institutional

organizations such as the Center for Army Lessons Learned. The authors note, however,

that the junior officers were unable to effect a change in the situation on the approach to

operations because the senior leaders were locked in a specific worldview. This generated

widespread dissent, of which the authors cite Lieutenant Colonel Paul Yingling's article

"A Failure of Generalship" as an example. Changes from the top would begin later as

combat-experienced senior leaders such as Generals William Wallace and David Petraeus

took positions in US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and the

Combined Arms Center respectively. This put senior leaders who could understand the

issues facing the war efforts into a position to affect how the military met the challenges

from a doctrinal standpoint. This led, in no small part, to the development of more robust

counterinsurgency doctrine, which could then be implemented. These changes based on

lessons learned at both the junior and senior officer levels helped facilitate a shift in

approach to the conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi

Freedom (OIF).

The transformation associated with counter-insurgency operations shows that the DoD possesses a level of adaptability when its current approaches do not generate the desired results. However, the article suggests that such changes tend to be slow in coming and require enough dissatisfaction within the institution to overcome institutional inertia. Carpenter (2006) argues that, for the Army, any cultural change must begin with senior leaders and translate to junior leaders through professional education. Senior officers must then incentivize behaviors that correspond with the new culture. However, there is no guarantee that the transformation borne out of recent conflicts will translate into increased adaptability to change for the next one. The learning and changes from Iraq and Afghanistan show that technical solutions arise readily from the technical expertise of the force, but cannot address the larger adaptive problems facing the institution. When the leaders experience and lead through the conflict; adaptive solutions arise.

Services outside of the US Army are not immune to the need to transform. Mastroianni (2006) notes that given its relative short organizational history, the US Air Force has yet to face a substantial institutional challenge such as those faced by other services. He highlights the technically and occupationally driven elements of Air Force culture as well. Provided technological innovation continues to drive changes in warfare and the Air Force continues to be the dominate air power, there may be little impetus for cultural change. Shultz (2011) argues that transformation, at least in terms of the lessons from conflict, is a part of Marine Corps ethos. He argues that Marine Corps culture around learning has enabled the Marine Corps to adapt to the insurgency in Anbar province in 2005. He contends information from the ground in 2005 was rapidly added to the I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) campaign plan for 2006 and formed into the

Marine's counterinsurgency approach. This would be passed on to II MEF's plans for the province and lead to success in Anbar province. Thus, at least from this example, it appears the Marine Corps is more open to change that suits accomplishment of its mission. This flexibility nests well with the Marine Corps emphasis on readiness to meet any challenge (Taylor 2011).

VA Culture

The VA, perhaps building on Schein's work on organizational culture, adopted a set of core values and characteristics intended to apply throughout the department (VA 2012b). It adopted as core values integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence. These core values, according to VA, serve to define the department's culture and how all members of the organization serve Veterans, their families and others. The core characteristics, as an extension of the VA core values, guide how VA will fulfill its mission of serving Veterans and their families. Broadly speaking, VA intends to shape its organizational behavior to conform to its desired characteristics. The core characteristics are: trustworthy, accessible, quality, innovative, agile, and integrated (Department of Veterans Affailrs 2012b).

Like the DoD, the VA consists of several large administrations: the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), as well as other smaller offices located within VA Central Office (VACO). The major administrations, like the military services, fill unique roles within VA. Given their size and distinct purposes, it seems plausible that they should have distinct cultures.

VHA operates a system of 152 medical centers and approximately 1,400 community based clinics (Veterans Health Administration 2011). VHA states that its mission is to "honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being." Aspects of its vision include "be the benchmark of excellence and value in health care," "care will be delivered by engaged, collaborative teams in an integrated environment that supports learning, discovery and continuous improvement," and "emphasize prevention and population health and contribute to the nation's well-being" (Veterans Health Administration 2011). An important aspect of VHA's achievement of this vision is patient safety. In 1999, VA formed the National Center for Patient Safety to help transform its organizational culture around patient safety (Commonwealth Fund 2010). The center created systems such as process checklists designed to improve team communication, adverse event reporting designed to facilitate continuous learning and organizational improvement and integration of patients into patient safety. (Commonwealth Fund 2010). Many of these changes required not only process related changes, but also cultural shifts in how employees and caregivers perceive the care team, adverse events, and patients generally.

Similarly, Vestal, Fralicx, and Spreier (1997) highlight VHA's reorganization in the 1990s under then Undersecretary for Health Kenneth Kizer, MD. Kizer described VHA as "a highly centralized, rigid, and hierarchical collage of independent medical centers" (Vestal, Fralicx, and Spreier 1997, 340). These authors note that the VHA facing Dr. Kizer seemed to possess a hybrid culture that could be bureaucratic, hierarchical and centralized at its upper echelons, and patient-focused and flexible at the operational level. The authors, however, advocate for cultural targeting that identifies the organization's

desired qualities, as well as rapid change and decisive leadership to overcome internal

and external barriers to change.

Author Philip Longman argues in his article "The Best Care Anywhere" (2010)

that the VHA performs as well or better than its private sector counterparts on many

quality and safety indicators. He points out that Dr. Kizer rapidly changed not only

technical aspects of VHA (e.g., its VistA electronic medical record) and its organizational

structure, but also its organizational culture. In particular, he focused on a rapid shift

from acute inpatient care to primary care in the outpatient setting. This fundamentally

changed VHA's approach from disease treatment to disease prevention. Similarly, he

helped create the culture of quality and safety highlighted by the Commonwealth Fund.

VHA's current mission, along with its deep interest in patient safety and continuous

improvement seems to have roots in the changes led by Dr. Kizer. It may be reasonable to

think that VHA's culture is characterized by high standards and continuous improvement.

The VBA is the arm of VA charged with the coordination and delivery of benefits

to Veterans. These benefits include compensation and pensions, survivors benefits,

employment and education assistance, guarantees for home and small business loans and

life insurance (VA 2010). VBA states its organizational vision is for veterans to feel the

nation has kept its commitment to them, employees feel recognized for their contribution

because they are part of something larger and taxpayers feel VBA has met its

responsibilities. VBA identifies accountability, integrity, and professionalism as guiding

principles (Veterans Benefits Administration 2012). A 1998 study of organizational

cultures in four offices within VBA and five offices within Defense Contract

Management Agency found VBA office culture was shaped by laws, traditions, and

regulations. It found the organization placed heavy emphasis on process and procedures (Hennessey 1998). Recent testimony from a Veterans Service Organization leader (U.S. House 2012a) noted VBA has undertaken significant steps to reduce backlogs and improve its processes. He also noted, however, that these processes rely heavily on rules and statistics and incur significant costs. His statement seems to indicate that, in spite of its efforts to make significant improvements, VBA's organizational culture remains a barrier to success. He noted: "an organizational culture that places more emphasis on rules than results, statistical validity than solid outcomes, deludes itself and is doomed to mediocrity at best, at the expense of those it purportedly serves" (U.S. House 2012a). Thus, VBA seems to be caught in a conundrum. On the one hand, its goal is to provide excellent service to Veterans, employees and the nation. On the other hand, as Dao (2012) notes, it must apply standards fairly while following complex regulations which change regularly. Similarly, the organization is tasked to increase throughput while maintenance of good stewardship of Federal funds engenders a complex system. Given this environment, it seems that VBA has developed a procedure intensive culture as a means to operate accountably, with integrity, and professionally.

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) is charged with providing for the care of VA-administered national cemeteries and commemoration of Veteran's services to the nation (National Cemetary Administration 2012). NCA describes its standards in terms of customer service. The standards reflect NCA's commitment to Veterans and their families. They include courtesy, access, prompt delivery of service and benefits, accuracy, appearance, and effective outreach. A 2010 survey using the American Customer Satisfaction Index, which measures customer satisfaction across industries,

gave the NCA 96 out of 100 points in categories such as customer service and user trust

and an average score for the index of 94 out of 100 points. These scores were

substantially higher than other Federal entities and many private sector companies

(Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, VA 2011). The stated values of the

NCA, along with its performance on major satisfaction surveys suggest that a dominant

characteristic of NCA culture is a commitment to exceptional customer service.

Like DoD, the various administrations within VA have developed distinct

cultures. While they operate within the VA corporate core values and characteristics,

their cultures grow out of their specific roles within the organization. One common thread

between VHA and NCA is an organizational culture predisposed to adaptation. For VBA,

it appears that the will to transform is present, but circumstances prevent significant

change because of the necessarily rule/policy/procedural nature of its work. Despite the

available information providing signposts about the nature of VA culture, little empirical

evidence exists to fit VA culture within a quantitative schema. Having considered the

literature on systems, problem formulation and leadership, and organizational culture, as

well as the cultures of both DoD and VA, it seems appropriate to consider how IDES

came about.

IDES Genesis

As a result of more than a decade of persistent conflict, disability evaluation is a

highly relevant topic to DoD and VA leaders, Service Members, Veterans, their families,

and their elected representatives. As the United States military reconstitutes, the military

services will have to consider the health of the force as it plans for the future. Statistics

from the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center reveal that, from 2000 to mid 2012,

there were 244,217 medical diagnoses of Traumatic Brain Injury, of which 46,795 were moderate to severe/penetrating. While 84 percent of those injuries were not deployment related, such injuries represent a significant issue for the health of the force (Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center 2012). Similarly, a 2010 Congressional Research Service report found that, as of early September 2010, there had been 88,719 cases of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder for the period 2000-September 2010 (Fischer 2010). Further, it seems reasonable to believe that additional cases of both Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder will arise as long as conflicts continue. While these conditions do not necessarily make a Service Member unfit for service, an effective disability evaluation system is essential to ensure that Service Members receive effective and timely assessments to help them either return to service or transition to civilian life and receive appropriate disability benefits and post-discharge care.

Further, as the U.S. military forces return to a peacetime readiness posture, the forces expect to scale back their force size. In his budget request for fiscal year 2013, Army Chief of Staff General Raymond Odierno noted that the Army would reduce the size of the Active Duty force to an end strength of 490,000 soldiers by 2017, down from the peak end-strength of 570,000 in 2010 (Odierno 2012). Further, the Marine Corps plans to draw down from 202,000 to 182,000 over four years beginning in fiscal year 2013 (DiCicco 2012a).

A 2006 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report indicated discrepancies between services on how they conducted disability examinations. The report also noted insufficient oversight of DES timeliness and inequities in the processing times between Active Duty and Reserve forces (GAO 2006a; GAO 2006b). In February 2007, a series of

articles in the Washington Post exposed conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the problems facing Service Members in the disability evaluation system (GAO 2008). In 2007, several commissions reported on the care of Service Members and Veterans. The Task Forces consisted of: Returning Global War on Terror (GWOT) Heroes; the Independent Review Group on Rehabilitative Care and Administrative Processes at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center (hereafter referred to as the Independent Review Group); the Presidents Commission on the Care of America's Wounded Warriors (hereafter referred to as the Dole/Shalala Commission); and the Veterans Disability Benefits Commission. All recommended substantial changes to the Disability Evaluation System. These task forces recommended a wide array of actions on the part of DoD and VA, including revamping the DES, improving mental health care, reduction of the VA benefits backlog and the development of better approaches and tools for addressing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes 2007; Independent Review Group 2007; Dole/Shalala Commission 2007; Veterans Disability Benefits Commission 2007; Yen 2007). In November 2007, a pilot project set out to redesign and streamline the DES, improve transparency and reduce wait-times to access VA benefits. This pilot would later become IDES.

This chapter discussed the scholarly literature surrounding interagency collaboration, systems, problem formulation and organizational culture and how the IDES came about. It discussed various theories of systems and ways of framing organizational culture. It also offered a discussion of the various subcultures operating within DoD and VA. This review provides the context for an analysis of the real

problems facing IDES. However, before conducting an analysis of the problems, one

must begin with a solid methological foundation. The next chapter discusses the

methology used in this research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This thesis proposes to look at the IDES in a new way. Current approaches to fixing the IDES process address the elements of the process itself without respect to the agencies and actors involved. In general, these approaches seem to have met with limited success. This thesis attempts to frame the real problem affecting IDES performance along three lines of effort: systems, problem formulation, and organizational culture. This chapter discusses the various methods, frameworks and tools the author used in conducting his analysis of IDES. It also illustrates how the author will draw conclusions about the organizational cultures of DoD and VA and the specific hypotheses the author will test using statistical methods.

Methodology

To address the three lines of effort relating to IDES systems, problem formulation, and organizational culture, the research applies a thorough document review which incorporates review of agency directives, doctrine, senior leader speeches, congressional testimony, strategic plans, oversight reviews, and discussions of Complex Adaptive Systems, leadership, and interagency collaboration from scholarly literature. The research drew on many of these resources in chapter 1 and chapter 2 to introduce IDES and approaches to systems, problem formulation and organizational culture. This literature will come principally from web-based searches using open-source government and non-governmental websites and online scholarly databases, such as Elsevier, JSTOR,

and Science Direct. In particular, the research will draw extensively from published works on IDES, such as news articles, Army Medical Command publications, Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports and the testimonies of senior DoD and VA officials from Congressional websites. The author will use this document review to answer many of the secondary questions throughout this work.

In the systems line of effort, the document review will address the secondary questions: "who owns IDES;" "how is IDES currently structured;" "where are the shortfalls within IDES;" "what solutions have DoD and VA leaders put forward to improve IDES to this point.?" In particular, research in this line of effort will study how the IDES came about, how it has evolved into its current state and how the system currently operates. In particular, qualitative research in this area will focus on the "nuts-and-bolts" associated with IDES operations, the various oversight reports outlining and assessing the system and organizational responses to problems and the comments of senior leaders as they describe what the departments have done to solve problems facing IDES and disability evaluation. Answering the questions in this line of effort will illustrate how IDES interacts with its environment in response to the disability evaluation problem and demonstrate the types of approaches put forward to solve the problem at the strategic and operational levels.

In the problem formulation line of effort, the review will address the secondary research questions: "how is the IDES problem framed and defined;" "what are the current IDES goals and objectives;" and "how well do IDES goals and objectives address the problem?" Qualitative research in this line of effort will draw extensively from works that frame the broader disability evaluation system problems, most notably the four

commission reports that helped initiate the movement towards a single disability evaluation system. It will then turn to initial approaches put forward by DoD and VA to streamlining disability evaluation. Finally, it will again look to the words of the various senior agency leaders to show how the agency leaders view problems associated with disability evaluation and IDES. Connecting these three areas will help trace the evolution of leadership thinking on the various aspects of disability evaluation. It will also show how the definition of the disability evaluation environment and the disability evaluation problem shaped the development of IDES and how the characterization of the problem further informs solutions to IDES timeliness issues and the response from oversight bodies.

In the final line of effort, organizational culture, the document review will address the secondary research questions: "how visible are DoD and VA organizational cultures in IDES;" "how have DoD and VA cultural interests, incentives, goals and values influenced approaches to improving IDES;" and "are the current metrics reflective of DoD and VA values?" This qualitative approach will help to identify whether the areas identified in the lines of effort are a source of problems affecting IDES performance.

This author also uses quantitative methods to frame differences in organizational culture between the DoD, VHA, and VBA. This analysis forms the basis for addressing the secondary question: "how are DoD and VA organizational cultures defined." The answer to this question frames further discussion of organizational culture. The research uses the CVF of Cameron and Quinn as a lens for categorizing and comparing organizational culture for each department. A key tool in the CVF is the OCAI, a survey instrument developed by Cameron and Quinn.

The quantitative analysis begins with an analysis of DoD culture. Extracting data

from existing studies, this author will consider the organizational culture of the DoD and

the various military services in order to assess whether and how the cultures of the

organizations may differ, and how, in turn, that might impact the interests, values and

incentives of actors within them. In order to characterize DoD culture, the author will use

a meta-analytical model to compare studies that used the OCAI to assess organizational

culture (n=7). Meta-analyses is a technique that allows the researcher to combine the

results from multiple studies (Boston 2002). In this analysis, the research uses a fixed-

effect meta-analysis. This approach was chosen because the studies involved use the

same approach and instrument (the OCAI) and the only difference in the effect sizes are

assumed to differ only because of the different samples used (Pigott 2011). These studies

represent a total sample of 2,298 military and civilian personnel working in DoD, both in

the military services and the larger DoD. Table 2 illustrates the populations and samples

used in the analysis. The results of these studies will be aggregated and weighted by

sample size in order to create a weighted average from the seven studies in the analysis.

Table 2.		Populations and Samples of Studies Using OCAI to Assess Military Culture	
Author	Year	Setting/Population	*N*
Kotzian	2009	DoD Professional Military Education institution (military)	1048
Kotzian	2009	DoD Professional Military Education institution (civilian)	236
Paparone	2003	"Military University of Senior Executives" Faculty and Students	222
Pierce	2004	Senior Military Leaders (US Army War College)	533
Davis	2010	Army Field Grade Officers at Army Command and General Staff College	42
Schupbach	2009	DeWitt Army Medical Center Military and Civilian Employees	45
Kovack	2008	Naval Air Systems Command Contracting Directorate	22
Wildenberg	2006	"Army Academic Institution" Faculty and Students	150

Source: Created by author.

The research takes a similar approach to evaluate the culture of the VA. The VA All-Employee Survey (AES) from 2011 and 2012 contains questions analogous to those found on the OCAI used in analysis of DoD culture. Appendix A provides a crosswalk of AES and OCAI questions. By matching VA AES questions to the OCAI and using the results, this research will categorize the cultures of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the VBA into one of the four archetypes defined in the CVF. VHA and VBA are analyzed as they are the two VA administrations involved in IDES. Because National Cemetary Administration (the third VA administration discussed in chapter 2) has no role in IDES, it will be excluded from this analysis. In the analysis, each AES question is treated as corresponding to one of the four CVFarchetypes (Adhocracy, Clan, Hierarchy or Market). The archetypes are then further broken down as representing valuing flexibility (Adhocracy and Clan) or stability (Hierarchy and Market) and having an internal (Clan and Hierarchy) or external (Adhocracy and Market) focus. The research

then uses Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the mean score for each archetype to determine if there is a statistically significant difference present within the four archetypes. Tukey's Highly Significant Difference (HSD) and Scheffe post-hoc tests (Stevens 1999) are applied to determine which of the archetypes is dominant, and student's *t*-test to determine statistical differences between perceptions of stability vs. flexibility and internal vs. external focus.

<center>Instruments</center>

The AES is offered annually to all VA employees throughout the three major administrations (VHA, VBA, and NCA) as well as the various organizations under VA Central Office. The AES consists of 62 questions covering three major topic areas: job satisfaction (13 questions), organizational assessment (31 questions), and organizational culture (18 questions). The questions on organizational culture assess employee perceptions of VA culture as supportive of groups (three questions), entrepreneurial (four questions), bureaucratic (four questions), rational (three questions) and enabling (four questions). Employees rate their perceptions on the basis of a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Organizational culture questions on the AES did not change between 2011 and 2012 (VA 2011; VA 2012a). The AES results do not imply that any one organizational culture is preferable to another, nor does the survey allow employees to express their preference for the characteristics of the culture of their organization. Further, since responses to each question are independent of one another, it is possible for employees to agree to survey items that, on their surface, may seem mutually exclusive (e.g., characterizing a culture as both bureaucratic and entrepreneurial). However, by aggregating the results and applying them to the spectrum

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of responses given by Quinn and Cameron, this author will measure which of the four cultural archetypes is more strongly perceived by VA employees.

The AES has several notable differences from the OCAI used in studies of DoD culture, in spite of the similar questions noted in Appendix A. First, the OCAI has six major questions, each with four possible responses, and each of which corresponds to one of the four cultural archetypes. Respondents are given 100 points to allocate across the four choices, with the higher number of points allocated to the response employees perceive most strongly. This means that there is a greater distinction between responses, since placing greater weight on one option leaves less weight for others. Second, the OCAI measures the preference of agents with respect to organizational culture. Respondents repeat the survey using the same six questions, this time allocating points based on their preference for how they believe the organization's culture should be. This measures the alignment of organizational culture to participant desire. It also provides leaders with an idea of how they can help steer the organization's culture in a way that will have the most positive impact on the working environment of employees.

This author contends that, while the AES lacks many of the hallmarks of the OCAI, it remains a viable tool for categorizing the organizational cultures within VA. Similarly, the organizational culture of VA Central Office was examined, but only to illustrate any potential differences in organizational culture between agency employees at the strategic level and those in the field at the operational level and below.

<u>Analysis in the Competing Values Framework</u>

As noted in chapter 2, the CVF uses two axes based on the organization's tendency towards flexibility or stability and its internal or external focus. Cultural

archetypes are based on combinations of observed/preferred qualities in those two areas: Clan (flexibility, internal focus), Adhocracy (flexibility, external focus), Market (stability, external focus) and Hierarchy (stability, internal focus). Each question on the AES has at least one corresponding OCAI question, and an associated archetype, with its associated qualities. Thus, using the average AES response to each question, one can calculate a flexibility/stability score and internal/external focus score for each echelon of the VA. The formulas for the scores are as follows: Flexibility versus Stability equals the total clan question score plus total adhocracy question score, minus the total hierarchy question score plus total market question score. Positive scores for this axis indicate an organizational culture that dominantly values flexibility. Negative scores for this axis indicate an organizational culture that dominantly values stability.

Internal versus External Focus equals the total adhocracy question score plus total market question score, minus the total hierarchy question score plus total clan question score. Positive scores for this axis indicate an organizational culture that dominantly values a focus on the external environment. Negative scores for this axis indicate an organizational culture that dominantly values a focus on the internal environment.

In order to best illustrate VA organizational culture, the analysis looked at the perceived culture of the VA as a whole, VHA and VBA, and the organizational cultures of the organizational subgroups within those cultures (VA Central Office, the 21 VHA VISNs, and the four VBA Areas). This established ranges to look for homogeneity or heterogeneity of organizational cultures within the field-based elements of VHA and VBA in order to compare them to the perceived culture operative within VA Central Office.

45

Comparing and Defining DoD and VA Organizational Culture

This research posed a series of questions to be answered using the previous studies of DoD culture and the AES in order to compare and define the organizational cultures of DoD and VA. First, given that both DoD and VA are large organizations operating within the Federal government, this thesis contends that the two agencies will share a common cultural archetype. Second, with respect to VA, given its organizational size, heavily process-oriented nature and existence as an entity within the Federal government, VA employees will perceive their organizational culture as one that values stability over flexibility. Third, because VA finds itself effectively competing in the healthcare, loan, and insurance marketplaces and given the high degree of scrutiny the agency faces, VA employees will perceive their organizational culture as one that takes an external focus as opposed to an internal focus. Finally, this author contends that the organizational culture operating within VA will align with the "Market" archetype described in the Competing Values Framework. These assertions were examined using statistical tests including Student's *t*-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and post-hoc tests such as Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) test and the Scheffe test (Stevens 1999).

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates how this author will apply qualitative methods that incorporate a document review of agency directives, doctrine, senior leader speeches, congressional testimony, strategic plans, oversight reviews, and inter agency agreements. The author applied the lessons drawn from these documents and discussions of Complex Adaptive Systems, leadership, and interagency collaboration from scholarly literature to

answer secondary questions that helped to identify whether the areas identified in the lines of effort are a source of problems affecting IDES performance.

Secondary questions answered using document review were aligned into each of the lines of effort as follows. In the systems line of effort, the document review addressed: "who owns IDES;" "how is IDES currently structured;" "where are the shortfalls within IDES;" "what solutions have DoD and VA leaders put forward to improve IDES to this point.?"

In the problem formulation line of effort, the review addressed the secondary research questions: "how is the IDES problem framed and defined;" "what are the current IDES goals and objectives;" and "how well do IDES goals and objectives address the problem?" In the final line of effort, organizational culture, the document review addressed the secondary research question: "how visible are DoD and VA organizational cultures in IDES;" "how have DoD and VA cultural interests, incentives, goals and values influenced approaches to improving IDES;" and "are the current metrics reflective of DoD and VA values?"

This author also used quantitative methods to frame differences in organizational culture between the DoD, VHA and VBA. By applying analytical methods and statistical tools, this author was able to characterize the cultures of both agencies and suggest how organizational culture could impact IDES performance. This addressed the secondary research question: "how are DoD and VA cultures defined?" and inform discussion of other secondary research questions in the organizational culture lines of effort.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

Having reviewed the literature on interagency collaboration, systems, problems

and leadership and organizational culture, this chapter will use documents written for and

about IDES to identify the real problems facing IDES. The chapter first establishes how

the DES pilot (later IDES) came about, then discusses how the process currently

operates. It then discusses the performance measures associated with IDES and the

solutions that have been put forward to IDES. Drawing on this information, the thesis

will answer the secondary questions put forward in chapter 1 based on the three lines of

effort: systems, problem formulation, and organizational culture. These answers will help

formulate an answer to the larger questions around the problems facing IDES and provide

a basis from which to build solutions that DoD and VA can use to improve the process to

the benefit of Service Members.

DES Pilot

Prior to establishing the DES pilot program in 2007, the DoD and VA held a five-

day table-top exercise in order to simulate a variety of options for structuring the

program. The 40 plus participants in the table top exercise used metrics from 33 disability

evaluation cases from across the military services and simulated the outcomes from

varying approaches (GAO 2008). The exercise also included participant rating of the

alternatives and consideration of the legislative and regulatory impact of the changes.

Developers sought to create solutions that would limit required legislative or regulatory

changes (GAO 2008). Table 3 illustrates the various alternatives considered during the

exercise. Based on the results of exercise, the participants selected Alternative 2 as the

structure for the DES pilot.

Table 3. Pilot Alternatives Considered by DoD and VA During 2007 Table Top Exercise			
Alternative	Comprehensive Medical Examination?	Single Disability Rating by VA?	DoD-level Evaluation Board?
Alternative 1	Separate DoD and VA exams	Yes	DoD board makes fitness determination
Alternative 2	Exams done by VA	Yes	Services make fitness determinations
Alternative 3	Separate DoD and VA exams	Yes	DoD board hears appeals of service level fitness determinations
Alternative 4	Separate DoD and VA exams	Yes	DoD board provides quality oversight of service fitness determinations

Source: Created by author based on United States Government Accountability Office, *DoD and VA: Preliminary Observations of Efforts to Improve Care Management and Disability Evaluations for Service members* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008), 20.

The purpose of the pilot was "to establish the framework for support of a mutually

beneficial relationship between the DoD and VA in the implementation of a more

streamlined disability evaluation process" (VA and DoD 2007, 1). The pilot's intent was

to "evaluate and significantly improve the DES timeliness, effectiveness, simplicity and

resource utilization by integrating DoD and DVA processes, eliminating duplication, and

improving case management" (DoD 2007, 2). DoD and VA leaders noted that the pilot

unified two distinct processes: the DES, and the VA benefits process (U.S. Senate 2012c)

to "create a more Service Member-centric, seamless, transparent disability program"

(U.S. Senate 2012a). The pilot MOA stated that DoD "will provide oversight and administration of the exam processes for military members in the DES (with VA performing examinations where possible), while VA will ensure administration of the transition processes for the Service members found unfit" (VA and DoD 2007, 5.a.). The Policy and Procedure Directive Type Memorandum (PPDTM) establishing the pilot further reinforces DoD ownership of the exam process within the pilot. The PPDTM, coordinated with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, challenged senior leaders within the DoD (DoD 2007, 4-5) with responsibility for "develop[ing] and direct[ing] the DES Pilot in collaboration with the DVA," "ensur[ing] the conduct of a single, comprehensive, standardized medical examination," and "execut[ing] . . . a single, comprehensive standardized medical examination on all Service members referred to the DES pilot." In contrast, the VA VBA had responsibility for coordinating with DoD, providing information to DoD and the military departments, and ensuring that relevant training, data collection, and compliance occurred (DoD 2007). This arrangement suggested a consumer-supplier relationship between the DoD and the VA, in which DoD maintained ownership of the process while VA met the needs of the DoD with little role in the execution of the process or its oversight.

As is to be expected with any pilot project, DoD and VA built in many metrics in order to assess the performance and effectiveness of the pilot (DoD 2007). Broadly, these metrics fall into four categories: timeliness, consistency, customer satisfaction and efficiency. Twenty-one timeliness measures assessed whether various aspects of the DES pilot represented an improvement over the legacy system and the degree to which the various aspects of the process met the target standard. Fourteen consistency metrics

examined whether the pilot process generated substantially different disability rating distributions or more challenges than the legacy process. Finally, three satisfaction measures evaluated the degree to which Service Members approved and accepted the new process. A single efficiency metric assessed the cost of the new process over the legacy process.

The GAO (2008) noted that the exercise provided sufficient information to guide a pilot project. However, the GAO stated in a 2008 opinion that the pilot lacked sufficient data to support expansion (including a broader sampling of cases to support timeliness targets), a comparator group for assessing the effectiveness of the DES pilot against the existing system, and an approach to gain Service Member feedback on the process. With respect to feedback, the GAO noted that plans were underway to develop a survey, but that survey feedback might not be available at key decision points in the process. The 2008 GAO report concluded "failure to properly assess the pilot before significant expansion could potentially jeopardize the systems' successful transformation (GAO 2008, 24).

In its 2009 Annual Report, the VA/DoD Joint Executive Council (JEC) noted that Active Component Service Members completed the pilot in an average of 289 days, including pre-separation leave. Similarly, Reserve Component Service Members completed the DES pilot process in 270 days, well below the target of 305 days. In both cases, the pilot succeeded in meeting or achieving its goal. Further, the JEC reports that surveys of 2,500 DES participants (both in the pilot and using the legacy system) indicated that pilot participants were significantly more satisfied with their experience than non-pilot Service Members (VA and DoD Joint Executive Council 2009a). Because

results from the three initial facilities showed promise, the pilot was expanded to 27 sites

by the end of March, 2010 Senate 2010a; U.S. Senate 2010b). In July 2010, leaders in

both DoD and VA deemed the pilot a success, renamed it IDES, and ordered its

worldwide deployment effective October 2010, with full implementation by no later than

September 30, 2011 (U.S. Senate 2012a; U.S. Senate 2012c). In addition to

improvements in timeframe, the DoD also noted higher Service Member satisfaction with

the new DES over the legacy system (U.S. Senate 2010a; U.S. Senate 2010b). In order to

better understand how IDES intends to achieve better performance over the legacy

system, it is worth considering how the legacy system and IDES differ. Under the legacy

system, a Service Member would be referred to the DES for assessment to determine

fitness for duty based on an identified medical condition or injury. The Service Member

would have a series of physical exams at the behest of a Medical Evaluation Board

(MEB) to assess any medical conditions that could result in unfitness for duty (GAO

2008; Medical Evaluation Board Office 2011). The MEB would then forward relevant

documents, especially the Narrative Summary Statement (NARSUM) to the Physical

Evaluation Board (PEB). Other relevant documents could include: a history of the

illness/injury, laboratory results, the Service Member's health record, medication history,

physical exam results, non-medical assessments from the Service Member's unit

commander, line of duty investigation results, and personnel casualty reports (Wounded

Warrior Regiment n.d.). The PEB then determined fitness or unfitness for duty as well as

a percentage disability rating (under Title 10 USC) for Service Members certified as unfit

for duty (GAO 2008). The Service Member would then enter the transition process of

separation from service. This process culminated in the Service Member receiving his or

her Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD-214). He or she could then file a claim for VA benefits. Figure 2 illustrates the Legacy DES process.
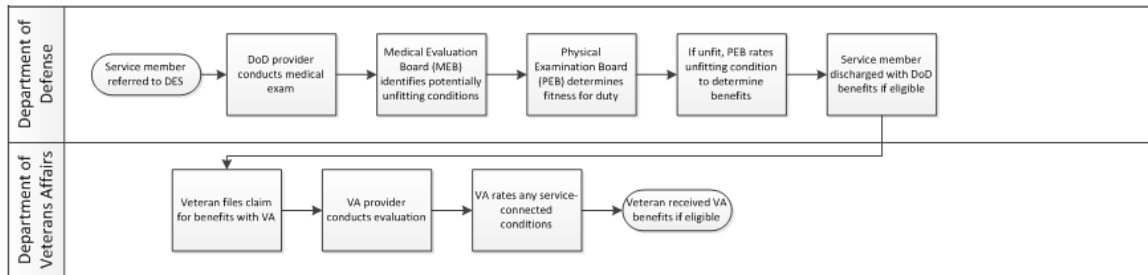
Figure 2.   Legacy DES System

Source: Created by author.

To file a claim, the Veteran would undergo a Compensation and Pension Examination at a Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Medical Center (VAMC). The VAMC would transmit the results of the VHA examination to the VBA Regional Office (VARO) responsible for processing the claim. The VBA would then assign a VA disability rating to the Veteran in accordance with Title 38 USC (Medical Evaluation Board Office 2011). This rating then formed the basis for disability compensation and benefits associated with the VA.

The IDES process shown in figure 3 differs from the legacy DES in that the IDES process unifies the DoD and VA components into a single system. It is worthwhile to remember that IDES maintains the DES pilot's intent to increase the timeliness and consistency of and customer satisfaction with the disability evaluation process (U.S. Senate 2010a; U.S. Senate 2012b; U.S. Senate 2012c). The process begins when a sick or injured Service Member seeks treatment for a condition. If the provider at the medical

treatment facility (MTF) assesses that the Service Member cannot return to duty, he or she refers the Service Member to a MEB (Army Physical Disability Evaluation System 2012, 5). The Service Member is then referred to the Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officer (PEBLO). The PEBLO works with the Service Member to assemble an IDES case file, including the initial portions of the VA Joint Disability Evaluation Board claim form. The PEBLO sends the VA form to the Military Service Coordinator (MSC), a VA employee who serves as a liaison with the MTF. The PEBLO then assembles other relevant information before sending the Veteran to the MSC (Army Physical Disability Evaluation System 2012, 6). The MSC works with the Veteran to complete the VA claim form, including any other conditions (besides those identified as potentially making the Veteran unfit for duty) the Veteran may want to claim. It is at this point that the Service Member and the MSC identify conditions for possible service connection (e.g., conditions or symptoms caused or aggravated by military service). The MSC then schedules the relevant separation-compensation and pension exams (Army Physical Disability Evaluation System 2012, 6). Once the exams are complete, the MSC transmits the compensation and pension exams to the PEBLO and the MEB provider. The MEB provider then uses the compensation and pension exam to complete the NARSUM. This point is different in that one exam serves for both the DoD and the VA (Medical Evaluation Board Office 2011). The MEB provides information on the NARSUM to the Service Member who may concur, non-concur or request an independent review (Army Physical Disability Evaluation System 2012, 8).

The next step in the IDES process is the PEB. The PEB under IDES functions similarly to the legacy PEB. The PEB under IDES can have two steps, the Informal

Physical Evaluation Board (IPEB) and the Formal Physical Evaluation Board (FPEB). The IPEB is a panel that makes its determinations without the Service Member present and based only on documentation. The IPEB determines fitness for duty, eligibility for compensation, disposition and combat-related-criteria (Army Physical Disability Evaluation System 2012, 10). Should the Service Member disagree with the fitness for duty decision, he or she may appeal the IPEB decision to the FPEB. The FPEB differs in that the Service Member may appear in person or via video-conferencing and may have legal counsel present. The FPEB nullifies the IPEB determination and makes an independent judgment. Should the Service Member disagree with the FPEB, he or she may submit a rebuttal of the FPEB decision (Army Physical Disability Evaluation System 2012, 12-14).

Once a Service Member is found unfit for service by the IPEB, he or she is referred to the VA for rating under both the DoD and VA rating system at a Disability Rating Activity Site (DRAS) (U.S. Senate 2012c; Medical Evaluation Board Office 2011). The Service Member may issue a one-time request for reconsideration of the proposed disability rating. Ideally, this ensures that a single actor processes both disability claims and issues a consistent disability rating (U.S. Senate 2012c). If the Service Member is found fit by the IPEB or the FPEB, he or she waits to transition back to duty. If the Service Member is found unfit for service, he or she waits to separate from service. During this period, the Service Member may take authorized leave (Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy n.d.). The last step of the transition process is the sending of the VA benefits after the Service Member separates and receives his or

her DD-214. The Veteran may appeal his or her rating within the VA system, but outside

of IDES.
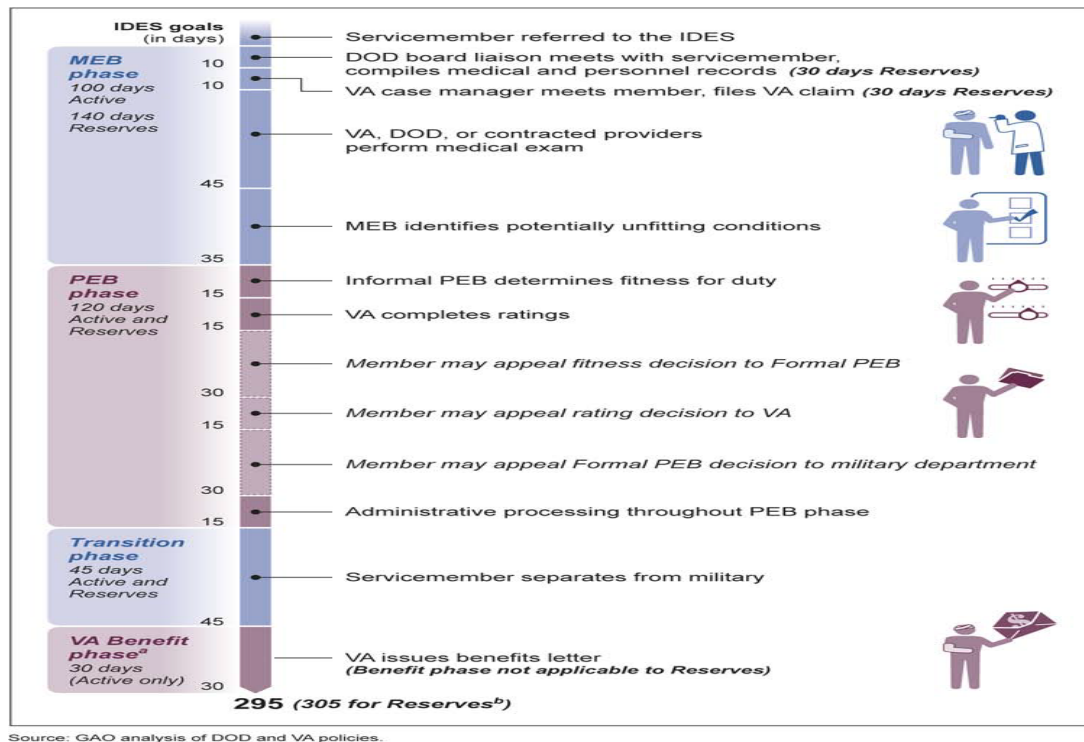
Figure 3.   IDES Steps and Timeliness Goals

Source: United States Government Accountability Office, *Military Disability System: Improved Monitoring Needed to Better Track and Manage Performance* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012), 5.

IDES has several targets for performance. Figure 3 also illustrates the various

steps in the IDES process and the associated performance goals. It breaks the process into

roughly four phases: MEB, PEB, Transition and VA Benefits. The target of the MEB

phase (referral to PEBLO, VA claim development, medical exams, MEB review and

documentation) is completion within 100 days for Active forces and 140 days for

Reserves (GAO 2012a; Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy n.d.). The

target of the PEB phase (referral to the IPEB, VA ratings, appeals and administrative

processing) is 120 days for Active and Reserve forces. The goal for the transition phase is

completion within 45 days for both Active and Reserve forces. Finally, VA should

deliver a benefits letter within 30 days of separation for active duty personnel only. As

such, the performance standard is 295 days for Active forces and 305 days for Reserve

forces.

<center>IDES Performance Measurement</center>

Given its ties to military disability and Veterans benefits, IDES has received

significant oversight, both from the collaborating agencies (U.S. Senate 2012a; U.S.

Senate 2012c), the legislative branch via the Government Accountability Office (GAO)

(GAO 2008; GAO 2010a; GAO 2010b; GAO 2011; GAO 2012a; GAO 2012b), and the

House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs. This high level of oversight and the

investment of leaders at the highest levels of VA and DoD (Lopez 2012; U.S. Senate

2012a; U.S. Senate 2012c) suggest that this initiative is of significant importance to the

agencies as a whole.

As part of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008,

GAO evaluated the efforts of DoD and VA to improve disability evaluations (GAO 2010,

2). This report, published in December 2010, found that the DES pilot showed promising

results. However, the report noted that there were inconsistencies in the comparator data

that were used to assess the case times under the legacy system (GAO 2010, 12). The

2010 GAO report also reflected concern that the case times under the pilot project were

increasing (GAO 2010, 13-14). For example, the report notes that in February, 2010, only

the Army and Navy achieved the performance targets for case completion (295 days for

<center>57</center>

Active forces, 305 days for Reserve forces). However, in August, 2010, only the Army met the performance target. A 2012 GAO report further indicated that the timeframes for IDES had increased since its inception as the number of cases increased (GAO 2012a, 9). The report noted that in fiscal year (FY) 2011, the average processing times for active duty and reserve forces were 394 and 420 days, respectively, with 18,631 cases enrolled (GAO 2012a, 7-9). In FY 2010, the average processing time for Active and Reserve forces was 367 and 370 days, respectively, with 9,713 cases enrolled.

The 2010 report noted gaps in personnel were one possible cause for timeliness issues. The report noted insufficient numbers of VA examiners, raters and case managers, military physicians, PEB members, PEBLOs and other staff (GAO 2010, 18-27). GAO testimony in 2008 suggested staffing might be a cause for concern after a review within the Army noted that some facilities lack sufficient board liaisons to meet the needs of Service Members (GAO 2008). The report also pointed out that some barriers to timeliness centered on the exam itself. These barriers included difficulty receiving records promptly and disagreements between VA and DoD physicians concerning diagnoses (GAO 2010, 28-31). Other challenges noted in 2010 included logistical challenges and housing challenges (GAO 2010).

In its 2012 report on IDES, the GAO highlighted the differences between DoD assessment of Service Member satisfaction and its own analysis (GAO 2012). In particular, the GAO noted that while the DoD calculated that 67.4 percent of Active Component and 63.5 percent of Reserve Component Service Members were satisfied with the process, this included Service Members who stated that they were either Very Satisfied, Satisfied or Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied. Further, the survey was based on

the average of satisfaction with all aspects of the process (GAO 2012). When the GAO

assessed satisfaction the basis of responses of Very Satisfied or Satisfied, the satisfaction

rate was found to be about 24 percent. This suggested that a substantial portion of the

Service Members surveyed was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the process.

<u>Solutions</u>

Both agencies developed mechanisms to address these issues. In response to

issues noted by the GAO, staff at the operational level within the DoD have used tools

such as Microsoft Excel to streamline patient tracking and reporting. DoD has reviewed

this "Watchboard" system with a view toward national deployment (DiCicco 2012b).

Staffs at the operational level have leveraged assistance from small unit leaders and

limited duty staff members, as they did at Naval Hospital Camp Lejuene (Grant 2012).

There have also been process changes at this level. VA and DoD leaders highlighted

process improvements at Fort Riley, Kansas. The Fort Riley staff developed a "one-stop"

MEB case review. This prevented inappropriate cases from entering IDES. They also co-

located DoD and VA staff to facilitate more efficient handoff between interagency

partners. Senior leaders noted that these changes were borne from close coordination

between DoD, Fort Riley and VA staff and strong local workflow and communication

practices (U.S. Senate 2010b).

At higher levels, the agencies also worked closely to improve the process. In

2009, DoD offered expedited DES processing for Service Members with catastrophic

conditions and combat-related causes. This permitted rapid assignment of 100 percent

disability from both DoD and VA (DoD 2009). In 2010, the DoD and VA developed a

revised set of criteria for new IDES sites prior to their initiation of IDES operations (U.S.

Senate 2011b). This allowed VA and DoD to implement a standardized approach to certifying DoD facility readiness to implement IDES based on those criteria (U.S. Senate 2010a). VA and DoD also held joint training and planning meetings to build relationships as the pilot program expanded outside of the National Capital Region. The criteria developed in 2010 and addressed at the training/planning conference concerned staffing, space, information technology access and staff training (U.S. Senate 2011b). VA and DoD also collaborated to develop tools to improve the handoff between VA and DoD process steps using information technology to reduce the need to print and ship documents between agency actors at the operational level (Lukach n.d.).

The GAO further noted several improvements such as increased oversight by the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs and other senior departmental leaders, increased staffing, increased training, and upgraded information technology solutions (GAO 2012a, 23-29). The 2012 GAO report indicated that DoD and VA needed to improve IDES reporting and data quality. It further acknowledged that VA and DoD generated some new approaches to solving IDES problems, such as simulation modeling and tools to address data system gaps (GAO 2012a, 30-31). However, the 2012 GAO report did not provide data on any improvements made during FY 2012, when additional IDES sites came online and staffing increases could have affected processing times. In light of the efforts to improve IDES, one must consider why the problem remains, as yet, unsolved.

<u>Systems</u>

Based on the above information the research begins to provide answers to the secondary questions posed in chapter 1. The first questions were: "who owns IDES;"

"how is IDES currently structured;" "where are the shortfalls within IDES;" and "what solutions have DoD and VA leaders put forward to improve IDES to this point?"

The first question, "who owns IDES," offers a good starting point. From a purely bureaucratic standpoint, the information gathered in this research suggests that the DoD owns IDES. The MOA initiating the DES pilot stated that DoD has oversight of the exam process (VA and DoD 2007, 5.a.). Further, DoD has administrative control over two significant aspects of IDES, the MEB and the PEB. DoD also supports the transition phase of IDES. This oversight and control indicates that DoD is most able to control the process, and therefore owns the process.

However, from a practical standpoint, this idea does not hold. As noted earlier, both DoD, VHA and VBA each have responsibility for particular aspects of the IDES process. Given the practical and oversight considerations at play, it seems probable that the various aspects of the process are owned by the primary process stakeholder. For example, VHA could be considered the owner of the disability examination process, while VBA may be seen as the owner of the benefit evaluation portions of the process through their DRAS sites. To the extent that the outcomes of the process are within their control, this definition makes sense. However, it is difficult to say that this is necessarily true. The 2012 GAO (2012c) report found some Service Members may intentionally extend their time in the IDES process and the warrior transition process in order to take advantage of the opportunities available to them, including a steady income. If service members intentionally miss appointments, this skews the data as the situation lies outside of the control of VA or DoD.

Additionally, there are other inputs to the process which lie outside of the control of VA or DoD and IDES staff, such as a commander's letter as part of the packet sent to the MEB. In situations such as these, control over the human aspect of the process lie with the individual DoD and VA staff members at the local level, as they are able to influence behavior either through proactive intervention (e.g., reminding individuals of their responsibilities ahead of time), just-in time actions (e.g., reminder calls) or follow-up action to address cases that go beyond timeliness thresholds. Thus, ownership of the process must lie beyond the individual agencies. Further, since the processes in various geographic areas differ slightly (such as the "one-stop shop" at Fort Riley), the local staffs possess a greater degree of ownership allowing a greater potential for innovation. As such, the agents at the local level appear the most appropriate "owners" of the IDES process. Senior leadership oversight, then, appears to hinge on ensuring that the local process owners have sufficient flexibility to operate effectively and efficiently. However, this oversight should not imply control. Thus, given the ambiguities presented, the answer to the question of ownership remains in question.

Having discussed the ownership of IDES, we may now discuss the secondary questions concerning how IDES is structured and how it operates. The IDES operating framework was discussed earlier in this chapter. Broadly speaking, IDES maintains a producer-consumer model in which DoD and Service Members provide specifications to VA for assessment. These specifications come in the form of referred (from DoD) and claimed (from the Service Member) conditions. VA provides an assessment based on the requirement of those stakeholders and uses its resources and knowledge base to render a physical assessment and disability evaluation within the guidelines of the VA disability

rating standards. On its face, this appears to be a fairly complicated and mechanistic

process. Indeed, there are a finite number of conditions for assessment, as each

assessment has certain standards that must be met, each claim must conform to a certain

standards and so on. This aspect of IDES does, indeed, look to function mechanistically.

If the sole purpose of IDES were an exam and claim throughput in sterile environment,

such a description would be adequate. However, as discussed IDES operates in an

environment of uncertainty (since Service Member disability is unpredictable), disability

claims rely on MEB and PEB judgment of fitness for duty, and the ultimate outcomes

must be fair (both based on standards and Service Member perception). Since the process

is structured in a step-wise fashion, actors must rely on and interact with others in order

to achieve the desired end state. Changes within a given portion of the process (e.g.,

physical examination) impact the operation of other process elements (e.g., MEB and

PEB steps). Changes to IDES do not occur in a vacuum. As such, although IDES is

structured to function mechanistically, its actual operations appear to be not just

complicated, but also complex.

Given an understanding of the IDES's local ownership and complex nature,

shortfalls that currently exist within IDES and solutions put forward to address them can

be considered. Shortfalls in IDES fall into three categories: resourcing, system design and

performance analysis. With respect to resources, the GAO found that as IDES expanded,

insufficient staffing was available to cope with the number of cases introduced into IDES

(GAO 2012a). As such, backlogs developed requiring not only expansion of staffing, but

also greater effort to get to a steady state. Resources shortfalls did not only include

personnel. Significant shortfalls identified by the GAO were the lack of a sophisticated

tracking system to identify where Service Members were in the IDES process, and identify cases that were open for an extended period of time. In both cases, GAO noted that DoD and VA had put forward efforts to solve the problems, either by hiring additional staff or developing information technology solutions to the problem, such as the Veterans Tracking Application.

Another IDES shortfall existed in system design. During the development of the DES pilot, developers sought rapid solutions to the DES that required minimal regulatory or legislative action. While this maximized DoD and VA control over the changes, it limited the range of options available to the developers. Further, the desire for rapid change limited the number of cases that could be simulated and analyzed during the table top exercise and could have misrepresented the complexity of the problem facing the actors in the table top exercise. As such, the DES pilot and its associated performance measures appear to address a complicated problem, rather than a complex one. The result is a system that may not effectively deal with changes in the operating environment or heterogeneity in conditions at sites (such as spikes in returning service members, higher than expected claimed conditions, differences between evaluators on what constitutes disability, case loads per staff member, etc.). IDES design, then, seems inadequate to address the complex nature of its operating environment.

However, as leaders in VA and DoD noted, individuals at the local level developed innovative solutions at their respective sites. Examples include the "Watchboard" at Quantico, VA and the "one-stop shop" at Fort Riley. These local changes represent, in some regards, what Complexity Leadership theorists would call "emergent" concepts (Marion and Uhl Bien 2002; Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey

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2007). They represent adaptation by the actors within given IDES micro-systems to their unique operating environment. Such changes occurred without direction from senior leadership, but with collaboration between actors within the system. These interactions resulted in subtle changes in the IDES design that met the needs of their own situations.

The final shortfall in IDES seems to come in performance analysis. IDES design establishes timeframes for each IDES step. This design assumes homogeneity in terms of caseload, performance of individual VA and DoD employees, case complexity (both with respect to examination and disability rating), and operating environment for the various IDES sites. Further, the standards apply across services, even though the intensity of operations for some services may be higher than others. This leads to either greater numbers of disabled Service Members, Service Members with a greater number of referred or claimed conditions, or both.

IDES also represents an attempt to provide an equitable disability rating to Service Members as they transition out of their Service. However, performance evaluation for the DES pilot stressed timeliness and maintenance of similar disability rating percentages with the legacy process. While Service Member satisfaction/acceptance with the pilot was included, it represented a small part of evaluation criteria (three of thirty-nine pilot performance measures). The IDES pilot provided no performance measures to assess the validity of disability ratings or provide outside or peer review of disability decisions. As a result the IDES performance analysis fails to account for unique environments facing the various IDES sites and some of the measures that could be impacted by complex environmental factors. VA and DoD have taken strides to address some of the problems associated with performance measures. For

example, after review of the timeframes around the "transition process step", observers found that delays in that step were outside of the control of the agencies or agency employees. Thus, VA and DoD revisited the impact of that step on the entire process by reporting performance with and without the transition phase (GAO 2012b).

VA and DoD are also working to resolve data integrity issues, data gathering, and training to help ensure equitable and customer-focused services, and address issues associated with Service Member satisfaction. The root of performance analysis shortfalls may lie less in the systems, but more in the area of problem formulation, as performance measures must serve to help leaders identify whether they are solving the right problem, The next section of this chapter will address the problem formulation line of effort.

Upon review, it appears that at least some of the real problems facing IDES fall into the systems realm. IDES is a process that takes a mechanistic approach to providing disability evaluations and ratings for DoD and Service Members. However, IDES operates in a complex system in which actors, agencies and the outside environment interact, conflict and attempt to forge solutions to problems. These solutions do not come from the higher echelons of either organization, but rather from the process owners at the lower levels of the organization. The higher levels of both VA and DoD have attempted to address shortfalls in resources and improve performance analysis. However, at present the larger IDES system does not appear structured to translate the emergent solutions at the micro-level to success at the meso or macro-levels of the system. As a result, IDES lacks the ability to translate success and innovation throughout the collaboration. IDES appears to approach the complex problem of disability evaluation as though it is merely

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complicated. Having addressed the systems line of effort, we may now turn to questions around problem formulation.

Problem Formulation

As noted in chapter 1, four task forces on wounded and ill Service Members provided proximate causes of IDES issues and findings. DoD and VA documents indicate that the DES pilot came about in response to these reports (VA and DoD 2007; Department of Defense 2007; Department of Defense 2012). The task forces themselves were convened for different reasons. President George W. Bush established both the Task Force on Returning GWOT Heroes and the Dole/Shalala Commission to report on and make recommendations on the transition of, delivery of benefits to and outreach to Service Members deployed in support of the Global War on Terror (Dole/Shalala Commission 2007; Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes 2007). The Independent Review Group came about as a result of reports on conditions for wounded service members at Walter Reed National Medical Center (Independent Review Group 2007). Congress created The Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission under Public Law 108-136, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2004 "out of concern for a variety of issue pertinent to disabled Veterans, disabled Service Members, their survivors and their families" (Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission 2007). Despite their different intents, the task forces emerged as a result of conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and the impact on Service Members. In 2006, the GAO noted that 1.3 million U.S. Service members (including Reserve and National Guard members) had served in support of OEF or OIF (GAO 2006c). It appears, then, that the DES pilot and IDES are responses by VA and DoD to respond to the needs of Service Members facing disabilities resulting

from their service in OEF or OIF. While not all of the Service members enrolled in IDES faced disabilities as a result of combat, one possible reason for the focus on a single physical exam is the influx of injured Service members from OEF and OIF.

However, collaboration between VA and DoD with respect to separation exams dates back as far as 1994 (GAO 2004). According to the GAO, VA and the US Army established a pilot program for single separation examinations at three installations, using different approaches (GAO 2004). The pilot sought to increase convenience for Service Members and eliminate duplicative physical examinations, particularly since VA Compensation and Pension (C&P) examinations tend to be more in-depth than separation exams (GAO 2004). The pilot, which ran during 1996 and 1997, was deemed successful and the Army recommended expansion of the single separation examination throughout the uniformed services. This led to a 1998 MOA directing local negotiation and implementation of single separation examination for Service Members near separation from uniformed service, not related to unfitting disability conditions who intended to file a VA disability claim (GAO 2004). This MOA established the Benefit Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program (VA 2001, 4). The GAO further stated that as of May 2004, VA reported that 28 of 139 BDD sites had programs in place. However, of the eight sites visited by GAO, four did not actually have a program in place (GAO 2004, 11). Notwithstanding the low level of program implementation, in 2004, VA and DoD leaders established a new MOA to expand and standardize the BDD program responsibilities (VA and DoD 2004).

While the BDD program is interesting in the context of benefit delivery to Service Members, it also represents a VA and DoD benefits-related collaboration. In particular,

its genesis was not the Global War on Terrorism, OIF or OEF. Rather, the BDD pilot and

the expanded BDD program seem to confront problems of inconvenience for separating

Service Members and increased cost to the government. Taking BDD and IDES together,

it is possible that VA and DoD view the DES pilot and the IDES program as expansions

of the BDD program already in place and view the problems outlined in the various Task

Force reports. Both the MOAs to implement the DES pilot (VA and DoD 2007) and

expand the pilot throughout DoD (VA and DoD 2009) state that the single disability

evaluation/transition medical examination pilot/program "expands on the concepts

outlined in the DoD/VA MOA 'Implementation of Cooperative Separation

Process/Examinations for the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs

for Benefits Delivery at Discharge." As such, it seems that DoD and VA frame the

problems facing the DES as ones of efficient program operation and service member

convenience, rather than a response to increasing volumes of Service Members facing

disability and heightened public attention to Wounded Warriors.

 The VA and DoD are not the only stakeholders in IDES. Congress and Veterans

groups also maintain an interest in the process. As such, they likely hold opinions as to

the problem(s) addressed by IDES. In her statement during the 23 May 2012 hearing of

the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee regarding IDES, Chairwoman Patty Murray (D-

WA) highlighted several themes, including equitable decisions regarding PTSD, correct

diagnoses, and timeliness (U.S. Senate 2012b). Similarly, Ranking Member Richard Burr

(R-NC) noted in his remarks that the timeliness issues within IDES created frustration

and quality of life issues for Service Members (U.S. Senate 2012d). Senator Burr's 2012

statement echoes many of the concerns raised in his statement during a 2010 hearing on

DoD/VA Collaboration (U.S. Senate 2010c). These statements underscore the relationship between the DES and quality of life for Service Members. While efficiency and timeliness are critical to successful operations, those operations also impact the lives and livelihoods of the Service Members involved. In the same way, the Service Members involved can impact the smooth operations of the system with respect to efficiency and timeliness. Ultimately, it appears that the problems facing IDES are not simply issues of doing things right, but also of building Service Member trust and confidence in the system.

Understanding how DoD and VA frame the problem solved by IDES helps one better understand the program's current goals and objectives. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the current IDES measures center on timeliness and customer satisfaction. Some outside of DoD and VA have raised issues related to fair adjudication of disability claims and the downstream impact of IDES on Service Member transition to civilian life (U.S. Senate 2010b; U.S. Senate 2012c; U.S. Senate 2012d), but recent oversight reports have focused primarily on timeliness and Service Member satisfaction (GAO 2012a; GAO 2012b). The DES pilot metrics further support the notion that improving timeliness and satisfaction with the DES pilot are the principal goals of this process. It is notable, however, that measures of accuracy and fairness seemed to be absent from the pilot. It would be uncharitable in the extreme to assume that this absence suggests that VA and DoD did not consider accuracy and fairness a vital part of the DES pilot. It is, perhaps, more likely that VA and DoD treated these aspects of the system as part of the evaluation process. Indeed, if VA and DoD employees conducting examinations, applying disability and fitness for duty standards and processing claims apply their knowledge and expertise

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appropriately, an accurate and fair output should be the result. Furthermore, this fair and accurate output should occur regardless of how the process is structured, since the standards applied should not change and they should be uniformly applied to all Service Members in the DES process. However, the timely delivery of disability benefits from both DoD and VA helps reduce the time Service Members spend waiting for closure on their case. As Senator Burr notes, this allows them to plan for the next phase of their lives (U.S. Senate 2012d). As such, VA and DoD frame the problem confronting disability benefit as one of process. One can argue that the agencies see timeliness and efficiency of benefit delivery as having positive second and third order effect on Service Member's lives. The development of IDES seems to be a mechanism by which to solve process-related problems. Addressing process-related issues alone, however, cannot address the complex issues surrounding perceptions of the process and issues facing interagency collaborations.

As noted earlier in the chapter, IDES seeks to solve the problem of timely and efficient benefit delivery. However, it is worth considering how VA and DoD frame the problems with IDES. Oversight reports suggest that IDES fails to deliver on its commitment to timely, service-member-centric benefits delivery. The reports, along with leadership testimony, note that VA and DoD have worked hard to fix these problems. The reports note frequent meetings between VA and DoD leaders, stepped-up oversight of the IDES process at the operational level, increased staffing, process revision for catastrophic disability, criteria for certification as an IDES site, increased staff training and development of solutions to address information technology issues (DoD 2009; GAO 2012a; U.S. Senate 2011a; Lukach n.d.; U.S. Senate 2010b).

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Leaders have also testified that operational level changes have, in some cases, yielded improvement in the performance of given sites (U.S. Senate 2010b). The improvements led at the higher echelons of the organization seem targeted to standardize the process, increase scrutiny of poorer performing sites and fix issues of efficient use of staffing. These solutions suggest that they perceive the problems facing IDES sites as ones that have technical solutions. Even if those solutions are complicated, they remain solvable with sufficient instruction or resourcing. Therefore, it appears that VA and DoD leadership both frame IDES problems as complicated in nature, but not complex. As discussed in chapter 2, complicated problems do not have solutions that are apparent to just anyone. However, given sufficient expertise, a solution can be found and implemented (Snowden and Boone 2007). Complex problems, by contrast, lack readily apparent solutions, even with sufficient expertise. Solving complex problems requires experimentation to probe the system and then a response as to whether to keep, tweak or undo the change (Snowden and Boone 2007).

Changes at Fort Riley and Camp Lejuene provide examples of operational level improvements, and seem to frame the problem as complex. Both influenced the relations between actors, and resulted in preventing cases from entering IDES in the first place, improving contacts between interagency partners through co-location, or improving relationships with parent units. This changed the patterns of interaction among actors within the Fort Riley and Camp Lejuene IDES micro-systems, while not significantly changing the process or its associated constraints. Thus, at least in the instances of Camp Lejeune and Fort Riley, it appears that leaders at the operational level framed the problems facing IDES as complex, as opposed to complicated, and accordingly made

necessary revisions. Having addressed how VA and DoD leaders frame the problems solved by and facing IDES, the discussion can now turn to the goals and objectives of IDES and how well those goals and objectives address the problem.

IDES goals and objectives relate closely to the problem of delivering benefits to Service Members and Veterans. VA and DoD leaders appear to consider the problems facing benefit delivery as an issue of inefficient or ineffective processes which, in turn, delay delivery of benefits, creates confusion and doubt about the process, and lead to dissatisfied Service Members. Thus, IDES's primary goal, was to correct the failing processes. As discussed earlier in this chapter, that meant redesigning the system so that DoD and VA processes occurred in parallel (under IDES), rather than occurring sequentially (as under the Legacy DES). By framing the problem in terms of processes, VA and DoD instituted changes that resulted in the DES pilot and later IDES. These changes endeavored to decrease variation and address the key issue of timeliness. VA and DoD put in place performance measures around timeliness and, a lesser degree, satisfaction. The performance measures also gave senior leaders a tool by which to gauge success or failure throughout their organization(s) and hold performers at individual MTFs, VAMCs, VISNs, and DRASs accountable for success or failure. The definition of the problem IDES solves ultimately frames the approach taken by senior VA and DoD leadership.

If VA and DoD leadership frame the problems within the disability evaluation milieu as ones of flawed processes, then IDES would appear to address the problem quite well. Although IDES seems to have more steps than the legacy system, the collaboration between the agencies should vastly reduce processing time and increase transparency,

since a single set of standards for disability is in use. Initial results from the pilot project would seem to confirm the reduction in processing time for VA and DoD benefits, and even though IDES does not meet its timeliness goals, the IDES process should still be faster than the legacy system. Addressing the process issues that increase waiting times for Service Members should also increase Service Member satisfaction with the process. However, this assumes that processes lie at the heart of problems IDES tries to solve.

Other issues such as Service Member trust in the various agencies, willingness of operational-level actors to cooperate, heterogeneity in the Service Member population (i.e. type of injury, location, willingness to cooperate with the process, etc are not process issues, but they prevent the process (even when well designed) from operating effectively. It is, therefore, probable that flawed processes do not tell the whole story and that other factors could interact with these processes to yield new problems not originally anticipated in the initial development of IDES. Thus, current objectives and goals may solve the problem identified by VA and DoD without solving the problems associated with disability evaluation and disability benefit delivery.

Further, the issues affecting IDES performance arise not at the strategic level, but at the operational level. These issues may be vastly different between sites, owing to the different actors, units, approaches and personal networks at the sites. IDES, however, seems to treat every site the same (at least with respect to performance measurement). Although senior leaders expect operational leaders and staff to address performance issues at their level, there seems to be little accounting for differences between sites. Operational leadership, however, appears best positioned to make the micro-level changes needed to solve problems with IDES. Such changes require a willingness to

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innovate and leadership that supports and encourages innovation. This leads to the third line of effort, organizational culture, and whether the organizational cultures of military services and VA support innovation as opposed to hierarchical approaches that look for top-down direction and standardized processes.

<u>Organizational Culture</u>

As noted in chapter 2, organizational culture frames how organizations and the people in them frame problems and respond to them. Given that IDES creates working relationships between elements of two large organizations, it may be worthwhile to consider how organizational culture impacts IDES. The first question to consider in this analysis is "how are DoD and VA cultures defined?" This will help us better understand how IDES may or may not reflect DoD and VA values. Then, we may begin to understand how the organizational cultures, with their associated cultural incentives, goals and values impact attempts to address issues with IDES and the metrics associated with measuring performance.

<u>Defining DoD and VA Organizational Culture</u>

As discussed earlier, one may define organizational culture qualitatively (as in Schein's approach (1992), quantitatively (as in Cameron and Quinn's CVF(2011) or using some combination of the two. While both approaches have merit, the CVFoffers a means by which one can compare, at least broadly, the cultures of the two organizations.

<u>Department of Defense</u>

Table 4 shows the respondents' perceptions of the organizational culture of their part of DoD as they currently perceive it. The studies indicate a mix of dominant

organizational cultures, with four studies finding the hierarchical culture dominant, two finding the market culture dominant, and the Kotzian study finding the clan culture dominant amongst both military and civilian respondents. As described in chapter 2, hierarchical cultures tend towards controlling environments characterized by an emphasis on stability and uniformity. Market cultures, by contrast, emphasize competitive achievement against external actors while still focusing on internal stability. Clan cultures, on the other hand, values flexibility as a means to grow internally and build a sense of teamwork and collaboration (Cameron and Quinn 2011; Davis 2010; Paparone 2003). Taking a weighted average of the studies based on sample population, one finds that the overall average score for each culture quadrant was Clan: 27.25, Adhocracy: 17.12, Market: 28.51, and Hierarchy: 27.07.

This result is interesting, as it indicates that while the Market archetype is dominant amongst the four types, it does not rate substantially higher than the Clan or Hierarchy archetypes. This suggests that the DoD culture could vary significantly between organizational echelon and subordinate organization or military service. However, the results of these seven studies suggest that DoD personnel perceive a high degree of stability within their respective organizations. This seems consistent with the operating procedural nature of some aspects of the military services and their civilian enablers.

Table 4.	Weighted Average OCAI Current Cultural Cimension by Culture Quadrant					
Author	Year	Now Clan	Now Adhocracy	Now Market	Now Hierarchy
Kotzian (military)	2009	29	19.7	26.1	25.2
Kotzian (civilian)	2009	33.6	21	21.2	23.6
Paparone	2003	27	17	27	29
Pierce	2004	21.2	11.8	38	28.8
Davis	2010	19.3	15.4	36.6	28.8
Schupbach	2009	29	16	25	30
Kovack	2008	18	17	31	34
Wildenberg	2006	30	13	24	34

Source: Created by author.

Turning to the preferred archetype, the studies found that respondents would like to see a more Clan-type organizational culture within their organization. Five of the seven studies indicated a dominant preference for Clan-type culture, with one study noting a preference for Market-type culture and one showing a preference for Hierarchical culture.

Table 5 shows respondents' preference for organizational culture within their subset of DoD. A weighted average of preferred culture quadrant score shows that the preferred scores were: Clan: 34.88, Adhocracy: 23.61, Market: 23.10, Hierarchy: 18.53. The preferred scores show that, while DoD personnel perceive their organization's culture as driven by stability and process orientation, their preferred culture would allow greater flexibility and freedom. The scores also suggest that personnel would prefer that the organization value internal harmony and strong integration (as with the Clan or Hierarchy archetypes). This is not a significant change from the current culture, as Clan

and Hierarchy weighted average scores were close to those of the Market culture. Figure
4 illustrates the weighted averages for the actual and preferred culture types.

Table 5. Weighted Average OCAI Preferred Cultural Dimension Score by Culture Quadrant					
Author	Year	Preferred Clan	Preferred Adhocracy	Preferred Market	Preferred Hierarchy
Kotzian (military)	2009	36.4	22.7	23	17.8
Kotzian (civilian)	2009	39.3	26.1	20.1	14.4
Paparone	2003	34	27	21	20
Pierce	2004	29	24.6	27.1	19.3
Davis	2010	25.5	23.4	27.7	23.2
Schupbach	2009	37	21	19	23
Kovack	2008	25	21	26	28
Wildenberg	2006	43	19	17	21

Source: Created by author.
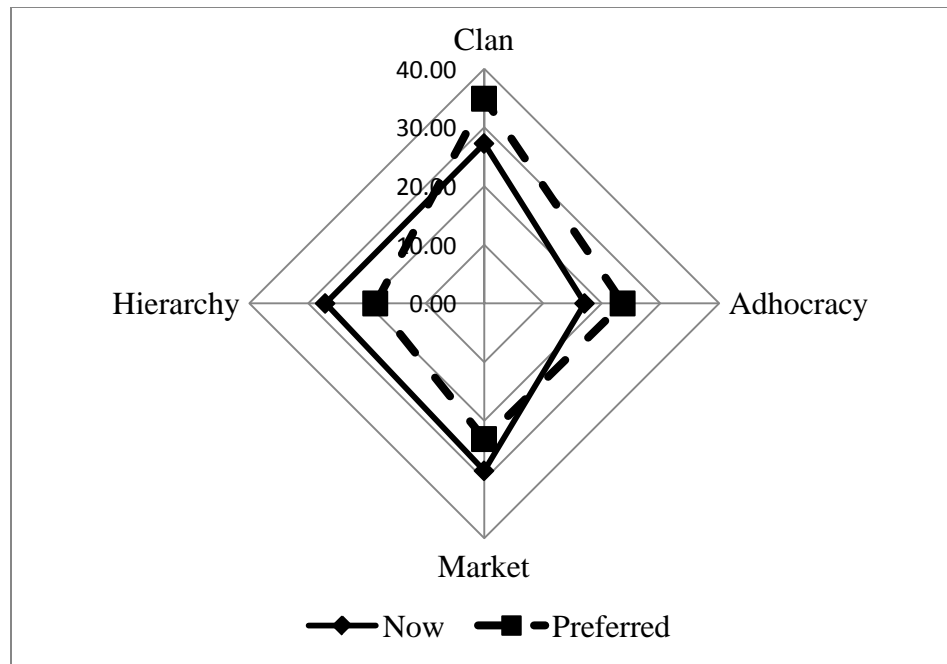
Figure 4.   Weighted Average of OCAI Actual and
Preferred Culture Results for DoD

Source: Created by author.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Given the lack of OCAI survey results on VA organizational culture, VA culture

appears more difficult to catagorize. The AES, however, uses questions which contain

elements similar to those found in the OCAI. The average response to these questions

allow one to frame the degree to which VA employees perceive that the culture within

their VA element align into one of the four CVF cultural archetypes. Table 6 and figure 5

present the combined culture scores for VA, VHA, and VBA by culture archetype.

Table 6. VA Combined Organizational Culture Average Response 2011 and 2012				
AES Year	Clan	Adhocracy	Market	Hierarchy
2011	3.12	2.91	3.28	3.40
2012	3.11	2.91	3.26	3.39

Source: Created by author.

Data from the AES does not suggest significant change in organizational culture from 2011 to 2012, but does indicate that VA employees perceive their organizational culture to fall into the hierarchy or market archetype. Appendixs C and D show the 2011 and 2012 (respectively) AES results from three VACO organizations (VACO, VHA CO, and VBA CO), the 21 VISNs and the four VBA areas. were re-coded to ensure respondent organization anonymity. The responses reinforce the conclusion that VA employees perceive their organizational culture as dominantly hierarchical, and that this exists across VACO organizations and the two major VA administrations active in IDES. In order to test whether there were statistical differences between employee perceptions of culture between VA and DoD, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and post hoc tests (Tukey HSD and Scheffe tests) were applied to assess the presence of differences, and determine where the differences lie. Figures 8 and 9 in Appendix E shows the ANOVA and post hoc test outputs from Microsoft Excel for 2011and 2012. The ANOVA tests indicate that a statistically significant difference exists in AES scores between the various culture archetypes (2011: $p<.001$, 2012: $p<.001$).
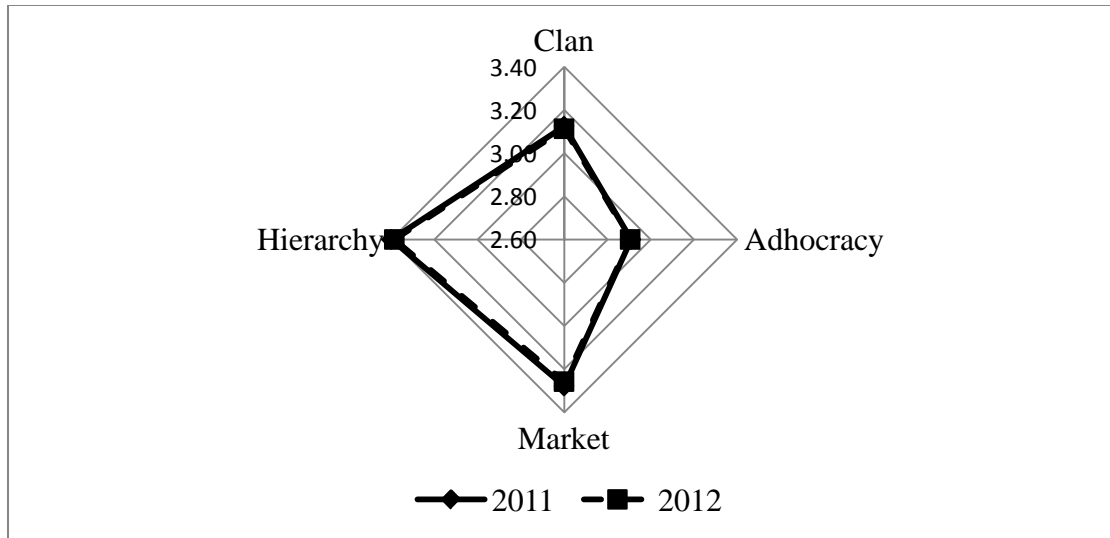
Figure 5.   Combined Organizational Culture Average Scores for
VACO, VHA, and VBA

Source: Created by author.

Post Hoc testing revealed that the difference in average culture score for each
archetype was statistically significant in both 2011 and 2012 ($p<.05$). This researcher
used two post hoc tests because studentized values for q in the Tukey HSD test were
unavailable for 108 degrees of freedom (based on the ANOVA output). As such, a
studentized q value for 125 degrees of freedom was accepted, which was available and
which was lower than the q values for 100 degrees of freedom. This made the
significance test more restrictive, but also provided a less than accurate $HSD_{.05}$ value. In
order to ensure accurate post hoc test results, this research used the Scheffe test, a
pairwise test that does not rely on coefficients like q. The Scheffe test, however, is more
conservative. This means that while it is less open to Type I error, it is also less likely to
report statistically significant results. However, for both 2011 and 2012, the Scheffe tests
revealed statistically significant differences between all four culture types ($p<.05$).

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These results suggest support for the previous figure 5 graph of VA as a predominantly hierarchical organization with a market culture as a secondary archetype. It appears, then, that VA employees perceive VA as valuing stability over flexibility, and focusing more internally than externally. To further test this, this author classified each AES question for two factors: flexibility or stability and internal or external focus. Classification was based on the CVF cultural archetype associated with each question. The author then placed each VA organization (VACO element, VISN and VBA area) on a two axis grid corresponding with the scores on the two factors. This placed each organization in one of the four CVF cultural quadrants.

Figures 6 and 7 show the difference in per question responses for 2011 and 2012, respectively. The figures illustrate the clustering of VA organizations in the hierarchical quadrant, with VBA employees perceiving a greater stability focus within their organization compared to VACO and VHA organizations. Interestingly, in spite of significant efforts around performance improvement and drive to compete with private sector health care providers, VHA employees still perceived an internal focus for their organization.

Two sample t-tests revealed no statistically significant ($p<.05$) change between 2011 and 2012 in VA mean scores for flexibility, stability, internal focus or external focus. However, t-tests did find that the differences between flexibility vs. stability scores and internal vs. external focus scores were significant ($p<.0001$) in both 2011 and 2012 surveys. The figures in Appendix D show the mean flexibility/stability and internal/external mean scores and t-test results. These results suggest that VA culture more with hierarchical than the other archetypes. Thus, the results of ANOVA, Post Hoc

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tests and *t*-tests all indicated that VA employees perceive their organizational culture as strongly hierarchical.
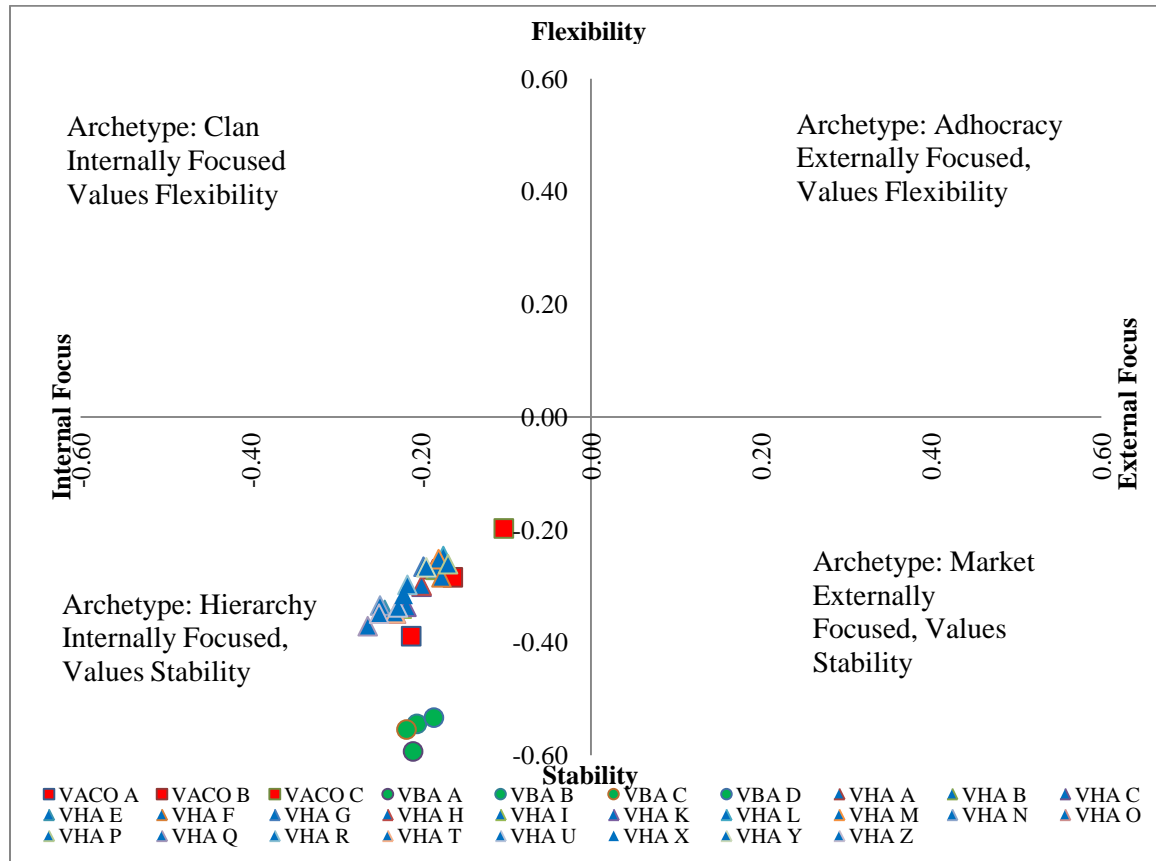
Figure 6.   Difference in Per Question Response—2011

Source: Created by author.

Comparison

The results contrast with the findings for DoD, which seems to possess a culture weakly differentiated culture that tends more towards the Market archetype. While the results of the meta-analysis do not suggest a dominate culture, they do indicate that DoD

employees perceive their organizational culture to value stability (as indicated in the weighted average scores for Market (28.51) and Hierarchy (27.07) cultures).

The results of this analysis allow one to define the organizational cultures of DoD and VA. First, it does not appear that VA and DoD share a common cultural archetype within the Competing Values Framework. This is due in part to the weak differentiation in organizational culture within DoD and the DoD tendency towards a Market culture However, the analysis revealed that DoD and VA share a common focus on stability over flexibility. Second, this analysis found statistically significant evidence that VA employees perceive an organizational culture that values stability over flexibility and an internal focus over an external one. Finally, the analysis showed that VA employees perceive their organization's culture fitting in to the CVF Hierarchy archetype.
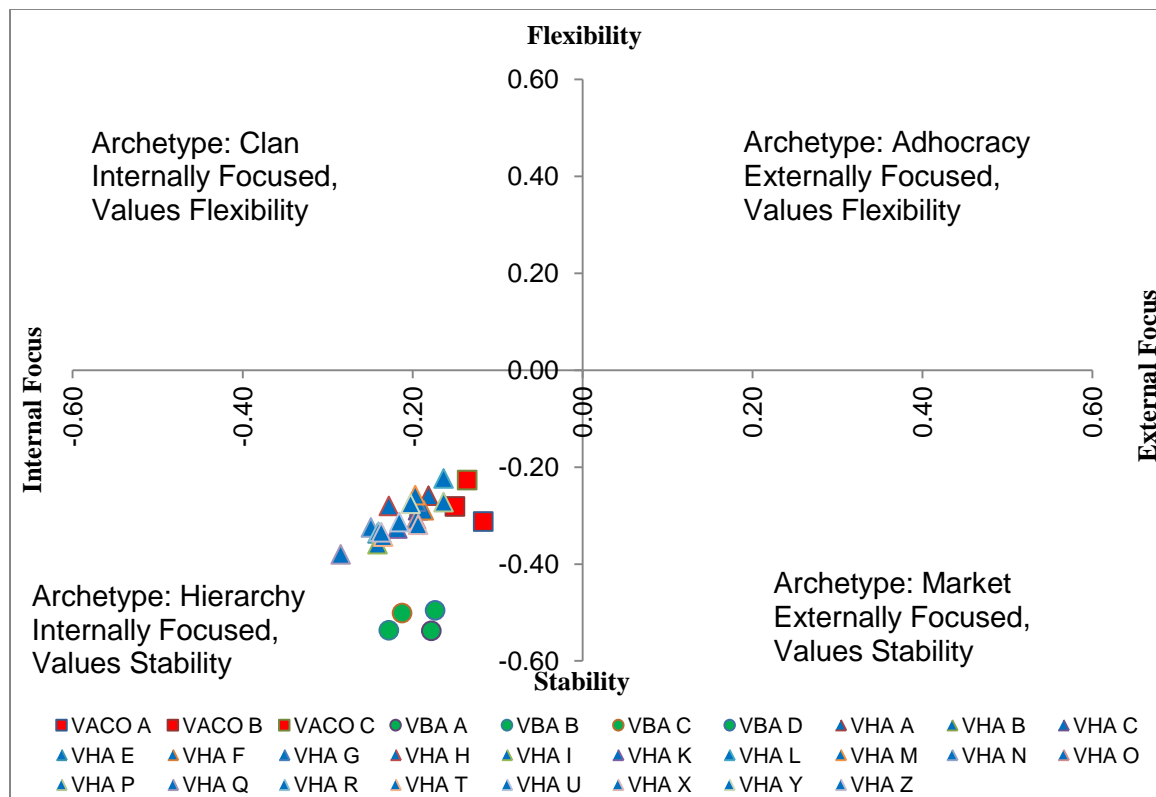
Figure 7. Difference in Per Question Response—2012

Source: Created by author.

Having defined the organizational cultures of both VA and DoD, how IDES reflects the organizational cultures of both agencies can now be considered. The IDES process and the various standards associated with fitness for duty and disability rating provide a useful starting point. Since VA and DoD cultures both value stability, one can expect the agencies to attempt to exert a high degree of control over both the operation of the IDES and the standards used in PEB and DRAS decisions. Indeed, the uniform process' timeliness targets for all sites (295 days for Active Component, 305 days for Reserve Component), services and soldier disabilities suggest that the agencies expect the process to operate in a consistent manner, and in such a way as to homogenize all cases.

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Similarly, the emphasis in oversight reports (GAO 2010a; GAO 2011; GAO 2012a) and leadership testimony (U.S. Senate 2012a; U.S. Senate 2012c) on senior leadership oversight as a means to improve performance further highlights the stability aspects of organizational culture. It does so by suggesting that the key to improvement is leadership engagement in ensuring compliance with and enforcement of procedures and standards.

IDES also follows a production model in which outputs at every step of the process serve as inputs for the next step. This creates opportunities for process slowdowns when unanticipated or unplanned circumstances arise that deviate from the existing plan and standards. Further, requirements around fitness for duty and disability rating demonstrate the importance of standard operating procedures and rating scales. These requirements promote fairness by ensuring that every Service Member is rated fairly in comparison to their peers. However, they also carefully define what does and does not constitute a disabling injury. This limits the flexibility of MEB, PEB and DRAS personnel in their assessment of fitness for duty, disability and appropriate disability rating for both DoD and VA compensation.

If IDES reflects the organizational cultures of both VA and DoD, how have agency cultural interests, incentives, goals and values influenced approaches to improving IDES? At higher organizational levels, one finds solutions reflect the organizational goal of standardization and stability. These include establishment of criteria for approval as an IDES site, joint training, and standard resource-based requirements for IDES sites (i.e., staffing, space, IT, etc.).

Standardization, in turn, increases the ability of organizational leaders to control the process and provides a predictable process across the organization. It also permits

easier assignment of accountability since failure to meet performance targets can be measured, as can adherence to proper procedures. Change, then, becomes a matter of identifying where the process is not functioning and prescribing a fix (via new procedures) to which all sites must conform. This permits change without considering the impact on sites with unique systems or processes in place as a result of their unique environments. At lower organizational levels, approaches to improving IDES seem to deviate from the larger cultures of DoD and VA. Rather than treating the problem as one of standardization and stability, operational sites identify the circumstances in which they operate and adapt to meet them. This tends away from stability and towards a more flexible approach in order to reach the standards set out by higher echelons.

For example, the "one-stop" shop at Fort Riley changes the nature of the process at Fort Riley in order to optimize performance. Similarly, the Watchboard concept at Quantico and assistance from small unit leaders and limited duty personnel used situations, expertise and tools available at those Marine IDES sites to meet the needs of the system. This introduces a level of flexibility not found in the solutions put forward by higher echelons, but still consistent with the goals of the agency. The operational level personnel appear to have balanced conformity to standards with opportunities to adapt in order to achieve mission success. Given that higher echelons must account for the success of all sites as opposed to those of a single site, such flexibility may not be an option open to them. They may, however, have the ability to delegate flexibility with process to their subordinates at the operational level (as they seem to have at Fort Riley, Quantico and Camp Lejuene).

The final secondary question posed in this thesis considers whether the current IDES metrics reflect DoD and VA values. Answers to this question appear mixed. Because DoD and VA personnel highlight their perception that stability is critical to both organizations. This suggests that the single timeframe for each process step, regardless of site, reflects DoD and VA values. It also suggests that large scale, centralized solutions are normal for the organizations. Organizational focus on meeting targets the targets, however, may not align with the organizational culture of DoD or VA. DoD personnel only marginally identified a market culture (which highly values goal achievement) as dominant within DoD. They almost equally supported the presence of a clan or hierarchical culture in DoD. The push towards process-oriented timeliness measures may align with some parts of the organization, but only weakly so. VA employees most strongly identified VA culture as hierarchical, and not driven so much by goal accomplishment as by adherence to policy and procedure. For VA, measures that focus on the process may seem congruent with the hierarchical culture. However, the emphasis on goal accomplishment treats the organizations as externally focused, market-style cultures. Such cultures look to goal accomplishment as a means of determining success, and change when goals are not met.

In contrast, internally focused organizational cultures (e.g., clan and hierarchy) consider whether personnel are either developing and growing (clan) or conforming to stated procedures (hierarchy) as a measure of success. However, in IDES, conformance to processes and procedures does not guarantee success. This suggests disparity between the value placed on performance against standards by senior leaders of both agencies and various oversight bodies and the cultures of the two organizations. Analysis of DoD data

suggests that the employees would prefer a clan type organizational culture that focuses more on the people within the organization and provides them greater control over their work. While such data is not available for VA, greater local control over the means by which they meet performance measures could foster improved performance. Additional study in this area may be warranted. Overall, it appears that current IDES performance measures, which are driven mostly by process timeliness, reflect DoD and VA values with respect to stability. However, the metrics also emphasize performance over permanence and encourage adapting to meet goals in an environment that, employees perceive, emphasizes staying the same.

In considering organizational culture, this research suggests that VA and DoD cultures are similar in that they seem to emphasize permanence and stability, but less similar in their approach to internal or external focus. However, a larger sample of DoD personnel across different organizational sub-cultures would add to the strength of the analysis of DoD culture. IDES, as designed, supports the VA and DoD values of stability and centralized approaches to solving IDES issues promote stability and centralized control. Local solutions, which seem to have yielded better results, leverage a limited degree of flexibility by making minor changes to the process or using local resources to create adaptive solutions to the problems facing IDES at the operational level. Finally, with respect to IDES metrics, the measures do not entirely reflect DoD and VA values. While the metrics do confirm employee perceptions around organizational focus on following policies, procedures and formalized rule, focusing too heavily on performance measures and results does not align with organizational focuses that appear to look inward to determine success.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the findings of research into IDES. It found that IDES attempts to apply a mechanistic, process-oriented approach to solve a multi-faceted, complex problem. Successful solutions to the problem arose from changes and relationships at the local level. It further found that IDES is not structured to translate micro-level success to the macro level. In terms of problem formulation, it found that leaders seem focused on process-related solutions, even though at least some problems lie outside of their immediate control. Such problems may be solvable at the operational level, where actors have greater influence over systems. This study suggests that operational leaders may be best positioned to influence the complex aspects of IDES by defining local problems and leveraging other actors at the operational level and requesting support for local change from centralized actors. Senior leaders, therefore, play a vital role in defining broader success and translate national goals to operational leaders. Thus, clearly defined problems at higher echelons requires consideration of standards that address the complex nature of the problem and the operational environment. Accomplishing this may, however, require that agencies consider how to do so given their organizational cultures. Employees perceive that the cultures value stability and process-control but, at least with respect to DoD, could be open to greater local control and employee development.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis set out to determine where the real problems facing the IDES lie. In order to do so, it focused on three major lines of effort from which problems might arise: systems, problem formulation, and organizational culture. The thesis used a variety of tools including oversight reports, news articles, statements by agency leaders, and official publications and memoranda. It also used published studies and existing data sets focused on organizational culture to conduct a fixed-effect meta-analysis aimed at synthesizing studies of DoD culture which used the CVF. The study also used VA All-Employee Survey (AES) data to fit VA culture into one of the four organizational culture archetypes of the Competing Values Framework. This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from this research and offers recommendations to VA and DoD leadership on both how to improve IDES and where next to focus its research.

This chapter highlights four key recommendations. First, VA should be designated the lead agency for IDES. Second, that VA and DoD form national collaborative efforts targeting IDES improvement. In particular, these collaboratives should group organizational-level entities with similar populations and operating conditions in order to generate solutions tailored to those groups. Third, VA and DoD should move from a single performance metric for all cases (295 days for Active Component, 305 days for Reserve Component) to a stratified system in which cases are categorized based on a variety of factors and where performance measures are assigned to each case-category. Finally, this thesis recommends that VA and DoD leaders facilitate a culture of change by empowering operational level leaders with clearly defined goals

and well-articulated limits on what may and may not be done in generating improvements.

Summary of Findings

Systems

In the Systems line of effort, this research first asked "who owns IDES?" Research revealed that the answer to this question is ambiguous. While at the highest level, it appears that DoD owns the process; at the operational level, the various military services and VA administrations (and their respective operational echelons) have responsibility for the success of the process. As such, there is no unifying process owner.

Next, the systems line of effort asked "how is IDES currently structured?" The research found that IDES follows a production-driven structure. Strictly speaking this would not be problematic, except that IDES operates in a complex and unpredictable environment. IDES, then, seems to treat the disability evaluation problem as one that is merely complicated as opposed to complex. The lack of a unifying process owner further exacerbates the problem of navigating the complexity inherent in the disability evaluation problem. The research found that experts from both agencies try to solve problems associated with their particular part of the complicated problem. However, the complex problem requires coordination between agencies to ensure that actions on the part of one department do not have deleterious effects on the actions of others. While the VA and DoD Joint Executive Council and senior leaders at the highest levels of both organizations regularly interact and attempt to coordinate and deconflict efforts, a single, unifying process owner would likely have the advantage of viewing the disability evaluation problem as a complete picture, rather than an agency-specific view.

Third, the systems line of effort considered:"where are the shortfalls within IDES?" The thesis identified three shortfalls: resourcing, system design, and performance analysis. With respect to resourcing, the thesis found that IDES was under-resourced early in its existence, but received additional resources over time. This corrected existing shortfalls and set the stage for better resourcing later in the process. It also illustrated, however, that increased resourcing was not sufficient to correct the problems inherent in IDES. In terms of system design, the research found that IDES was designed over a short period of time and with a limited field of options, ultimately designing a system for a complicated environment, rather than a complex one. This does not imply that IDES was ill-conceived. Rather, it demonstrates that the disability evaluation problem is one that requires longer-term study, experimentation, diverse experience and multiple perspectives in order to fully frame the problem. In the complex milieu of disability evaluation, one can view the current iteration of IDES as an experiment and use lessons learned to adapt the system for future iterations.

The final shortfall noted in this thesis was that of performance analysis. The underlying assumption operating within IDES performance analysis is the homogeneity of Service Member cases within IDES and the homogeneity of sites working those cases (e.g., MTFs, VAMCs, DRAS, etc.). This assumption led to the development of a single standard that bases success on all cases meeting a single standard (295 days for Active Component, 305 days for Reserve Component). Success or failure, then, hinges on the ability of the operational level actors in the process to homogenize cases which, by virtue of the different types of illnesses, injuries, Service Member and site specific factors, and other characteristics are heterogeneous in nature.

Finally, the systems line of effort asked: "what solutions have DoD and VA leaders put forward to improve IDES to this point?" This thesis found that, at the strategic level, VA and DoD have invested resources in the form of personnel and technology in improving IDES. The impact of these investments does not seem apparent. However, individual sites have undertaken their own efforts to improve the process by adapting the IDES process to address the nature of their location and population. These changes have generated results. By answering these four secondary research questions, this thesis demonstrated that the systems operating within IDES and their interaction with the disability evaluation environment are a part of the real problem facing IDES.

<center>Problem Formulation</center>

The problem formulation line of effort began by answering "how is the IDES problem framed and defined?" This thesis argues that VA and DoD frame the IDES problem as one of efficient program operations and service member convenience. IDES is built to efficiently receive, process and adjudicate disability claims. This problem formulation does not fully account for the system's social and political position and its many human aspects. These aspects in particular draw the disability evaluation problem away from being a complicated problem with readily apparent technical solutions to one that requires adaptive solutions based on experimentation and consideration of the impact of changes to one part of the process on the functioning of downstream processes. It further highlights the approach that led to a lack of emphasis on the complex nature of the problem. If the problem is one of increasing efficiency in a relative vacuum (by rejecting solutions that increase the actors in the process), then the solutions will focus more on

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addressing the complicated nature of the system itself rather than the complex interactions between the system and its internal and external environment.

Next, this line of effort considered "what are the current IDES goals and objectives?" Research in this area determined that IDES' ultimate goal is to provide for the timely delivery of benefits in order to serve Service Members and help them transition to their lives after military service. This goal reflects the challenge facing VA and DoD leaders, process developers and operational leaders. The task associated with IDES goals, "provide for timely delivery of benefits", fits the complicated, efficiency based problem formulation taken by VA and DoD personnel in developing IDES. However, the purpose of the system, "serve Service Members and help them transition to their lives after military service" speaks to the complexity of the problem. The process of transitioning to life after military service requires much more than efficient operations; and even an efficient, effective disability evaluation system may not meet the intent of assisting in the transition. IDES seems to have been developed with a clear appreciation of the task put forward by the various oversight commissions, but not necessarily with a view of the complexity of linking efficiency to smooth Service Member transitions.

Finally, this line of effort asked "how well do IDES goals and objectives address the problem?" From the perspective of IDES as a problem of efficient program processes and operations, the objective of timely delivery of benefits seems quite reasonable. Under this definition, solving the problem of effective and efficient processes should yield timely delivery of benefits. However, this neglects the larger environmental frame which includes human factors such as Service Member trust in the departments, barriers to interagency collaboration and a heterogeneous Service Member population with multiple

problem sets. Thus, while IDES goals and objectives may accomplish the task assigned by VA and DoD leadership, it may do so without solving the larger disability evaluation problem, and thus misses its larger purpose.

<center>Organizational Culture</center>

This thesis began its investigation of the effect of VA and DoD cultures by asking "how are DoD and VA cultures defined?" Through statistical analysis and using the CVFof Cameron and Quinn, this author found that while DoD culture was not clearly differentiated, VA culture was perceived by its employees as strongly hierarchical in nature. However, analysis revealed a strong tendency towards stability within the two organizations. This led to discussion of the question "how visible are DoD and VA cultures in IDES?" The research suggested that the presence of a single timeliness standard for all cases, reliance on leadership oversight as a means toward improvement, and the heavily process and procedure oriented IDES and disability rating systems are signs of a culture which values stability, permanence and adherence to defined modes of operation.

Next, the thesis turned to discussion of how "DoD and VA cultural interests, incentives, goals and values influenced approaches to improving IDES." Research identified that values around permanence and stability enforced the value of standardization and thus centralized control and dictation of centralized fixes to problems. It found that operational-level successes occurred at sites that deviated slightly from organizational values in favor of flexible, individualized solutions.

Finally, this thesis asked "are the current metrics reflective of DoD and VA values?" The answers to this question appeared mixed. The organizational emphasis on a

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standardized approach supports the idea of a single performance metric for all cases. However, the data found that the dominant culture in VA (hierarchy) and the unclear differentiation of DoD culture (split between clan, market and hierarchy cultures) indicated the primacy of process over measurable success. In IDES, however, conformance to process and procedure does not guarantee success in the form of timely case adjudication and Service Member transition.

The Real Problem Facing IDES

This thesis found that IDES, as presently constructed, represents a production-based approach that does not account for the variability associated with Service Member specific factors, site specific factors, and the interaction between them. This stems from a failure to recognize the complex nature of the disability evaluation problem and, at a higher level, of the difficulties associated with Service Member transition. Instead, solving disability evaluation was viewed as a matter of developing an efficient system. The system grew without a unifying process owner, with limited flexibility for operational-level changes and with little guidance as to the limits of such operational level changes. As a result, IDES treats a complex environment with unclear cause and effect relationships as one that is merely complicated, having clear cause and effect relationships to the well-trained examiner. One contributing factor to the development of this approach is the cultures of both agencies, which are based on employee perceptions, and emphasize stability and adherence to procedures rather than flexibility and innovation. These cultures encourage leaders at all levels to think in terms of process, standardization and homogeneity rather than build a system with inherent flexibility and adaptability.

The stability focused cultures of both agencies led to the development of standardized systems that do not fully account for the complex nature of the operating environment. It also prevents operational leaders from breaking out of established processes in order to meet the objectives of the IDES program while addressing the specific issues facing their separate DoD and VA environments. In spite of this aspect of organizational culture, this thesis found that performance (as measured by timeliness and Service Member satisfaction) improved when operational level staff exercised initiative and adapted IDES to meet the needs of their environment. Further, process and stability-focused cultures also constrain VA and DoD thinking. VA and DoD staff lacked a full appreciation of the complexity of the problem. As a result, they created a system with standards that do not fully account for the variability facing the organizations. From these findings, this thesis concludes that the real problem facing IDES is that it was developed without a full appreciation of the complexity of the disability evaluation problem, and with a process and efficiency driven focus reflecting organizational cultures that value stability, order, and standardization. This research suggests that IDES measures do not reflect the complex nature of the disability evaluation problem.

<div align="center">Recommendations</div>

Having defined the real problem facing IDES, this section outlines recommendations for how VA and DoD can make IDES more responsive to the complexities of disability evaluation. The first recommendation suggests that DoD and VA collaborate to determine which department will lead efforts to improve IDES in order to create unity of effort by embracing a supported/supporting relationship. The second recommendation suggests that DoD and VA better empower operational-level leaders to

tailor the IDES process to the unique operational environments that exist among the various IDES sites. The third recommendation argues that DoD and VA must adjust how they view timeliness in the IDES process. The presence of a single performance measure for all cases in a given component (e.g., active versus reserve components) sets a target without first considering whether the target is achievable based on the Service Member's condition(s). The fourth and final recommendation offers thoughts on how department-level leaders might approach creating a culture conducive to improvement. It will also outline limitations of the study and provide recommendations for further research in this area.

IDES Ownership

A critical first step in addressing the problems facing IDES is to decide who will lead the charge to solve IDES problems. This will change the relationship between the two agencies and lead to a supported/supporting relationship in which one agency subordinates its efforts and resource allocation to the guidance of another. It requires significant trust between the agencies. The supported agency will assume responsibility for appreciating the complexity in the environment, ensure unity of effort and bear responsibility for the success or failure of efforts to improve IDES. By contrast, the supporting agency will surrender at least some control over its resources, commit to ensuring that its personnel comply with the requirements of the supported department, and accept a subordinate role in efforts to improve the process. Of note, this relationship and change in ownership does not absolve both agencies from communicating effectively and engaging in constructive dialogue about the best ways and means needed to achieve the desired end state for the process. At the end of the day, however, there should be a

single entity capable of guiding the overall direction of all actors working on IDES. It is incumbent on that leader to fully embrace the complex nature of the problem and translate that complexity to subordinate and supporting actors.

Analysis in this thesis illustrate the difficulty in making a determination around which agency should take the lead in owning IDES. With respect to DoD as the lead agency, there are several strong arguments to be made. First, the process originates within DoD and the Service Members are part of DoD throughout the vast majority of the disability evaluation process. As a result, DoD should have the ability to influence the process and leverage VA resources to maximize the movement of the Service Member through the process. DoD has also learned many lessons about dealing with complex issues over the last ten years of conflict. Some of these lessons could be oriented on solving the problems facing IDES and disability evaluation. There is significant diversity within DoD, however, and it is unclear how service specific influence could impact overall efforts to improve IDES. Further, translating DoD specific requirements could be quite challenging to non-military and non-defense actors within VA.

As a lead agency, VA could have several advantages. Since many of the complicated parts of IDES have been transferred to VA (e.g., physical exams, disability standards, etc.), VA has taken on a greater ownership in the overall functioning of IDES since its inception. VA also has, at least in VHA, significant experience in process and performance improvement collaboration and could provide those lessons to DoD. Additionally, VA has a substantial interest in building trust and confidence among Service Members so that they become VA users in the future. Lastly, disability

evaluation is a core part of the VA mission, and leading IDES would serve as an extension of that mission.

The VA, however, faces a major challenge in adapting a strongly hierarchical culture into one that can adapt to complexity and provide the necessarily flexibility to subordinate and supporting actors. In both cases, unfamiliarity on the part of the supported agency with the full operations of the supporting agency could have negative second and third order effects on the operations of the supporting agency. While the ultimate decision around creating unity of effort in IDES must be made by senior VA and DoD officials, this author contends that the military and defense experience of VA senior and operational leaders would help them limit the negative second and third order effects to DoD. With collaborative improvement, VA should be able to overcome its perceived organizational culture and lead positive change in the complex disability evaluation environment. For these reasons, this author contends that VA should take on the role as the supported agency in IDES, with DoD playing a supporting role.

<center>Approaching Improvement</center>

One of the most significant findings of this thesis is that IDES appears to prescribe a "one size fits all" approach to disability evaluation. The process aligns process steps so that they occur in parallel and use resources more efficiently, but it appears to treat all disability claims the same. While this uniformity has the superficial advantage of supporting fairness in adjudication by ostensibly treating all Service Members the same, it also presents an operational challenge when claims with three claimed/referred conditions are treated the same as those with 13 claimed/referred conditions. On its face, this assumption seems invalid because the inputs to adjudicating a

case with 13 claimed/referred conditions should require more examinations and additional work in preparing the NARSUM and disability claim. Even this assumption falls victim to the complexity of the disability evaluation process. The work required for these two claims could be vastly different. It is possible that the case with three conditions could require more inputs than the case with 13 conditions because the three conditions could require multiple examinations, tests, and document reviews and the Service Member could be in a position where they cannot readily access the required resources because of location, family situation or other extenuating factors. As a result, it seems there is almost no way to predict the required inputs or barriers for the claim (and therefore offer an appropriate assessment of how long an individual case should take) until the Service Member presents with his or her claimed and referred conditions.

Further, a single standard suggests that all sites should have the same throughput given proportionate staffing without considering whether the sites themselves face the same challenges. In order to help every site improve its performance, department-level leaders should consider empowering operational-level leaders to tailor aspects of the IDES process to the needs and challenges facing their particular sites in an experimental fashion. It does not, however, permit them to change the performance standard. Rather it focuses on the ways in which the standards are met and the resources aligned with the various aspects of the problem. This approach could allow the sites to solve their own problems within limits set by department-level leadership and staff. It also expands on current efforts to hold operational-level leaders accountable for IDES performance in their respective area of control (e.g., VISN, VAMC, MTF, etc.), while increasing the flexibility available to them.

Given that the study found a preference among DoD staff for a more flexible organizational culture, organizational-level staff may welcome the change. The changes need not be permanent, particularly if they do not yield desired improvements. Rather, operational and senior leaders could take the changes as probing efforts to address local issues that could (and should) be shared with other sites. Leaders can institutionalize successful change and learn from unsuccessful efforts, providing details as to how others might succeed. The downside of this approach is that it draws time and resources away from the processing of Service Member claims and does not integrate staff from the different sites in the change process. At the same time, this approach limits the knowledge and experience used in improvement to only what is available at a given site. Ultimately, changes occurring in DoD might have little input from or give little consideration to impacts on VA and vice-versa.

A better approach might be to convene several national collaborative working groups from a variety of sites on a particular area. For example, groups representing a variety of branches, installation sizes, commands and sub-agencies can collaborate on a particular aspect of the IDES process (e.g., the MEB). This could draw in perspectives from across both agencies and bring together ideas from stakeholders applying the same process in different environments. This would ultimately increase the understanding of the staff across services and organizations and help them develop solutions at their own locations.

Further, the collaborative approach would help personnel develop networks, understand the needs, demands and incentives of others in the process, and help underscore the interdependence of all actors in the system. This form of collaboration

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would allow the participants within the process to craft (to borrow a term from Bardach) the system together without relying on specific guidance from superiors in the organization. Under this model, strategic leaders instead would provide the goals, guidelines and limits to the innovation. Operational level leaders would then take these goals, guidelines and limits and work with other participants to develop solutions that work within the bounds set by senior leadership.

Such collaborative efforts have proven effective for VHA in improving in areas such as colorectal cancer screening (Jackson et al. 2010), clinic access (Schall et al. 2004), and mental health care (Ford, Krahn, Wise, and Oliver 2011). This approach narrows the focus of improvement efforts to areas of highest priority to senior leaders while still permitting flexibility to working group teams and site participants as they endeavor to create solutions to problems that have effects throughout IDES. Further, since participants will come from a wide variety of sites, professions, backgrounds and organizations, the individual working groups can generate a wide array of solutions for testing at local sites.

Ultimately, using this approach to problem-solving requires the close collaboration between DoD and VA that Secretaries Shinseki and Panetta laid out in the quotes at the beginning of chapter 1. By embracing the supported/supporting agency concept discussed earlier in this chapter, the two agencies could take critical steps towards improving this collaboration by clarifying roles and responsibilities and generating increased unity of effort. A key downside of this approach is that the working groups would likely take longer to generate solutions for testing, since they must translate the ideas to others for implementation. Additionally, this work, while accomplishable via

telephone or video-teleconference, would best be done via face-to-face interaction. This increases the option's costs, demand for coordination and potential for scrutiny.

Rethinking Performance Standards

Another issue noted in this thesis is the single timeliness standard for all cases (295 days for Active Component, 305 days for Reserve Component). This standard seems to assume homogeneity among all cases, across all branches, and at all sites. While the standard ostensibly offers Service Members a point upon which to plan for their future, if DoD and VA cannot reliably meet the standard Service Members will have little reason to trust the performance metric. Furthermore, the single standard assigns a performance goal before the Service Member's claim is even developed. It is quite possible that the system could work a Service Member's claim exactly as intended and, as a result of factors outside of the control of DoD or VA personnel, the case takes longer than the centrally designated performance target. In some ways the current approach is analogous to that of an auto mechanic who promises that any repair will take 24 hours, regardless of whether the repair would be simple or highly complicated or if the appropriate parts and tools are presently available or need to be ordered. This places VA and DoD at a disadvantage with respect to meeting its goals of providing a Service Member-centric process.

One approach to addressing this issue is to develop a statistically-driven system by which to provide estimates of case completion times based on claimed conditions (both number, type and required testing), Service Member factors (i.e., location, number of deployments, caregiver needs, etc.), installation factors (i.e., number of cases, staffing, use of contractors, etc.) as well as other potential factors. It could also account for the

impact of Service Member appeals of the case. This would provide Service Members a more realistic assessment of the adjudication of their case. DoD and VA could even provide Service Members with a range of days and could continually refine their estimates as more and more Service Members complete the IDES process with similar complexities of conditions. This approach would generate a reinforcing loop whereby every case improves the quality of estimation for future cases. Service Members would, however, have to commit to cooperating with the process by keeping appointments, returning documents on time and working closely with PEBLOs, MSCs and others.

Since the volume of completed cases exceeded 18,000 records at the end of fiscal year 2011, and even more cases were completed in fiscal year 2012, the data set would seem to be robust in developing estimates of completion times. The estimates would also change the performance measure from one that seeks that all cases throughout the agencies meet a specific standard to one that asks how often sites meet the estimates that they gave to Service Members. Not only does this control for variability between sites, it also frames agency performance in terms of meeting Service Member expectations, while helping frame those expectations for Service Members. Additionally, since senior leaders have access to estimates at all sites, the senior leaders will still possess the ability to hold organizational level leaders accountable for their performance relative to other sites. This, then, will help drive improvement initiatives at the local level.

Unfortunately, this approach assumes that a reasonable system of estimates can be created that cannot be gamed in order to improve the appearance of performance. This system allows for the possibility that VA or DoD personnel might overestimate the time required to complete the process in order to ensure success. It also represents a significant

move away from measures used for the past several years because it moves from a standard based on overall timeliness to one based on meeting a commitment to an individual Service Member. While the change might be far more Service Member-centric, changing the system's key measure of performance while it is under scrutiny could reflect poorly on the agencies. Finally, this approach is far more data intensive and the impact of rarer conditions could be overestimated in such analyses, as smaller samples of those cases would be represented in the data as a whole.

Rather than completely redefining the measures of performance used in IDES, VA and DoD should stratify cases based on a variety of factors into a given set of categories. Instead of having a single standard for all cases, the process should have standards for cases based on their complexity. Since some cases are simply more resource and time intensive, it is fair to Service Members that VA and DoD acknowledge that they are not likely to hit the 295 day/305 day performance measure. Further, it is not even that clear that the performance measure (as it currently exists) is realistic or attainable for all cases. Acknowledging the complexity of the Service Member's claim up front helps frame Service Member expectations. Additionally, Service Members with cases that are reasonably clear cut and of limited resource intensity should be able to rely on VA and DoD to adjudicate their cases more rapidly than a single standard would reflect. By setting standards for each classification based on previous cases and other Service Member specific factors, the agencies can use a data driven approach that accounts for at least some of the variability inherent in the system.

Ultimately, this approach requires that the agencies define the important variables for categories prior to setting standards. These variables could include many of the claim,

Service Member, and installation based factors described in the first approach to standard-setting. Upon completing the claim development stage of the IDES process, IDES staff could assign each Service Member a category and target completion timeframe (based on that category) for cases completed prior to classification and subsequently classified and cases classified and then completed.

In a hypothetical five category system, the single central tendency measure would remain (e.g., the average completion timeliness for all cases). However, there would exist five additional measures, the average completion time for all cases of a given category. In this case, the central tendency measure would account for the timeliness of each of the categories (that is, the average timeliness for all cases would change with the timeliness for individual categories). DoD and VA could use data from prior cases to determine the appropriate performance target for each category, and by extension the appropriate mean target for IDES as a whole. However, the mean target would not exist as the sole standard for performance, but would instead serve as a point above and below which 50 percent of all case-times should fall. If it happens that 295 days is an appropriate average for cases of all complexity for the active component, so much the better. The more relevant measure in assessing performance is whether like cases are completed in accordance with performance measures based on their common characteristics. Leaders should assess how well, or poorly, a given site meets performance standards for each complexity level. As in the original approach, data drives the development of performance measures. The revised approach better enables Service Members to plan their futures by giving them a range of timeframes based on their specific case. The agencies can build additional flexibility and fidelity into their performance and effectiveness measurement schema. This approach

also supports a single process owner, because it opens the door to eliminating process-step related performance targets and focuses on what matters to the Service Member, the total time for the process. Figure 8 provides an example of how the distribution of cases and processing times might occur in a five-category system.
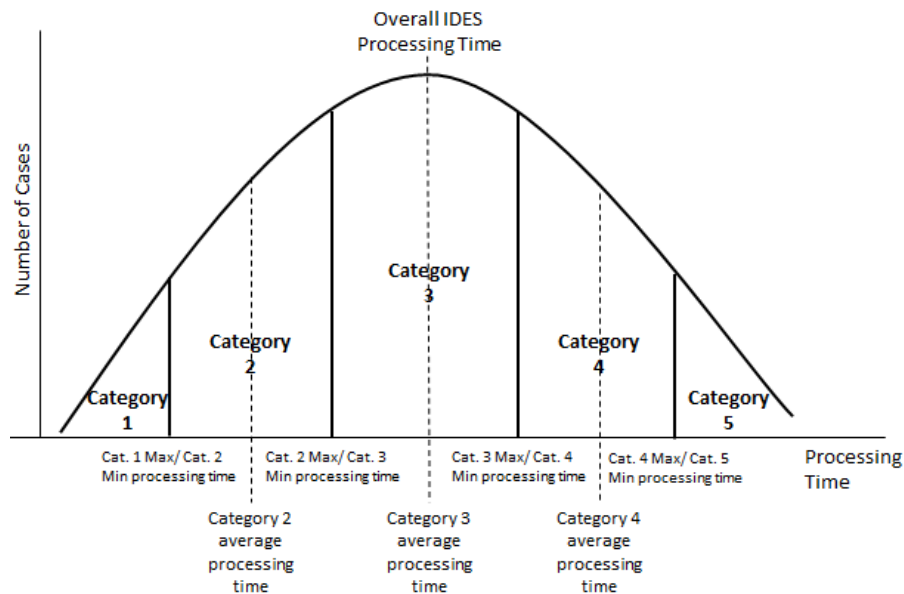
Figure 8.   Distribution of Cases and Processing Times in a Five-Category
IDES Case Classification System

Source: Created by author.

This approach provides a middle approach between a single standard for all claims and an approach that uses no definite standard for completion, but rather frames success in the form of meeting a quote to individual Service Members based on the nature of their claim. While this method is advantageous in that it is incremental and helps better align Service Member and organizational expectations regarding performance, the change will still face criticism from oversight bodies as "redefining

success." Such redefinition is not intended to solve the problems facing IDES. Instead, it sets the stage for actors working in the complex realm of disability evaluation by ensuring that measures of success account for the nature of the problem to the greatest extent possible.

Building a Culture of Change

Lastly, this thesis showed that both DoD and VA possess cultures that may not willingly accept change, at least when viewed at a very high level. The various surveys studied in this thesis suggest that DoD and VA employees do not perceive innovation and change as leadership priorities, and nor do DoD and VA normally vest this level of authority in their employees below fairly senior levels. This perception may exist at all levels of the organization even if it runs counter to what leadership intends. Without this perception, transformation, even if driven from the top of the organization, faces an uphill battle. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to recommend that DoD and VA actively pursue wholesale shifts in their organizational culture. Rather, DoD and VA must leverage the energy, knowledge and dedication of the individuals within their organizations and leverage the aspects of their respective organizational cultures which facilitate growth and development. However, in order to take full advantage of bottom-up changes that could improve IDES performance, DoD and VA leaders must begin by catalyzing change, incentivizing experimentation, and creating an environment where it is safe to fail. This may require department and administration level leaders to support and provide incentives to organizational elements that successfully innovate, and encourage attempts for change regardless of whether they succeed or not.

They can also create an environment that supports change by placing well-defined, but not overly restrictive, limits on what changes can occur. This maximizes the freedom of operational level leaders to control their environment with confidence. In some ways, this mirrors the US Army philosophy of mission command which has as guiding principles creating a shared understanding, providing clear commander's intent, and then encourage the exercise of disciplined initiative and acceptance of prudent risk (Department of the Army 2012c). As with the Army leaders, DoD and VA leaders should help operational leaders by ensuring that they fully grasp what their superiors perceive as the main problems to be solved in IDES and how they truly view the purpose, key tasks and end state for IDES. Doing so provides operational leaders a level of clarity that allows them to better direct their energies towards success. The senior officials must also willingly accept a certain amount of risk, which could be mitigated by limiting the latitude given to the operational leaders. Changing the approach to improving IDES helps VA and DoD develop new approaches to improvement and adaptation. More broadly, fixing IDES represents an opportunity to test a new approach to supporting organizational change.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This thesis approaches a range of topics and is not without its limitations. One significant limitation is that it approaches a finite number of potential issues facing IDES. This author chose the lines of effort based on a review of the literature and what he believed to be areas warranting further research. It is possible, however, that another area represents the real source of the problems facing IDES, or that the interaction of a series of factors is to blame. Further research into other areas impacting IDES performance is

certainly warranted. Such studies could include quantitative studies of various staffing methodologies, the impact of staff experience on the timeliness of IDES claims, statistical analyses of potential sources of delay on the total IDES processing time, and the effect of using contract examiners as opposed to employed examiners in adjudicating IDES claims.

Another limitation to this study concerns the methodology used in assessing the organizational cultures of both DoD and VA. With respect to DoD, the limited number of studies and their disproportionate representation of US Army participants likely skews the results towards an overrepresentation of Army culture, rather than a broad depiction of DoD culture writ-large. Including other studies of service culture (both quantitative and qualitative) could provide a more robust picture of DoD culture. The use of the OCAI, however, has the benefit of illustrating organizational culture using common definitions, and as such, it might be a useful tool as part of any future large-scale study of DoD culture. In analyzing VA culture, this author attempted to maintain fidelity to the OCAI in creating a cross-walk of AES questions to OCAI questions. In general, the questions matched well, but it is possible that the different verbiage in the AES questions could create impressions different than intended in the OCAI, leading to mis-classification of VA culture based on OCAI archetypes. Additionally, because the AES does not include preference questions on organizational culture, the AES lacks the ability to provide VA leaders with perspective on what sort of culture VA employees might prefer, or at the very least the characteristics they would like to see emphasized within their organization. Any change to the AES would represent significant effort, but some

form of analysis on employee cultural preferences might provide valuable information to leaders.

Concluding Summary

This thesis began by posing questions around the real problem(s) facing the IDES used by DoD and VA. Those questions lay within three distinct, but related areas: systems, problem formulation and organizational culture. The thesis explored the scholarly literature in interagency collaboration, systems theory, problem formulation and organizational culture in an attempt to understand the various areas and discern the relationships between them. The thesis then set out a methodology that mixed review of published materials and testimonies with quantitative analysis of organizational cultures using previously conducted studies and the annual employee surveys. The study found that IDES uses a production-based system model to solve a multi-faceted, complex set of problems. It further found that VA and DoD leaders seem to define the problem solved by IDES as one of production efficiency, and treating the problems existing within IDES as a failure of operational leaders to use the resources allocated to them most effectively.

At least part of this problem is explained by the organizational cultures of VA and DoD, which seem to value stability, permanence and adherence to procedure over flexibility, initiative and transformation. This led to the conclusion that IDES was developed without a full appreciation of the complexity of the disability evaluation problem, with a process and efficiency driven focus reflecting organizational cultures that value stability, order, and standardization. As a result, this research suggests that IDES measures do not reflect the complex nature of the disability evaluation problem. The thesis concludes by offering some approaches to increasing the adaptability of IDES

while maintaining the essential structure of the system and suggesting approaches for further research.

The thesis recommended first that VA take on the role of lead agency and receive operational support from DoD. DoD, for its part, would communicate and coordinate activities under strategic direction from VA. Second, this thesis argued that VA and DoD should develop national improvement collaboratives that group similar sites in making operational-level improvements to IDES. Such collaboratives would be guided by goals, guidelines and limits agreed to and imposed by VA and DoD leadership. This would allow VA and DoD senior leaders to ensure that their intents were met, while providing operational-level actors the opportunity to improve how their sites carry out IDES. Third, the thesis contended that VA and DoD should adjust the IDES performance standards to account for the complexity of the disability evaluation problem by stratifying all cases into categories based on case complexity. From there, performance standards would be assigned to each complexity group based on historical processing times for similar claims. This provides Service Members a realistic estimate of the claim processing time and ensures that IDES performance metrics better reflect the reality of the disability evaluation. Finally, this thesis recommended that VA and DoD senior leadership support a culture of change by providing clear pictures of the problem facing IDES, communicating the purpose, key tasks and desired end states for improvement efforts, and allowing operational leaders the flexibility and latitude to achieve leadership goals within the boundaries set forth by senior leadership. As a whole, these recommendations will help VA and DoD leaders guide both agencies in increasing the adaptability of IDES

and create positive outcomes for ill and injured Service Members transitioning from their time in military service to their life as Veterans.

CROSSWALK OF VA ALL-EMPLOYEE SURVEY QUESTIONS TO

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT (OCAI)

QUESTIONS

| VA All Employee Survey Question	OCAI Question	Organizational Culture Type	Flexibility /Stability	External/Internal Focus
My facility is a very dynamic and entrepreneurial place. People are willing to stick their necks out and take risks.	The organization is a very dynamic entrepreneurial place. People are willing to stick their necks out and take risks. (OCAI 1-b)	Adhocracy	Flexibility	External
My facility is a very formalized and structured place. Bureaucratic procedures generally govern what people do.	The organization is a very controlled and structured place. Formal procedures generally govern what people do. (OCAI 1-d)	Hierarchy	Stability	Internal
Managers in my facility are warm and caring. They seek to develop employees to their full potential and act as mentors or guides	The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing. (OCAI 2-a)	Clan	Flexibility	Internal
	The management style in the organization is characterized by teamwork, consensus, and participation. (OCAI 3-a)	Clan	Flexibility	Internal
Managers in my facility are risk-takers. They encourage employees to take risks and be innovative	The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify entrepreneurship, innovating, or risk taking (OCAI 2-b).	Adhocracy	Flexibility	External
	The management style in the organization is characterized by individual risk-taking, innovation, freedom, and uniqueness (OCAI 3-b).	Adhocracy	Flexibility	External
Managers in my facility are rule-enforcers. They expect employees to follow established rules, policies and procedures	The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify coordinating, organizing, or smooth-running efficiency (OCAI 2-d).	Hierarchy	Stability	Internal

VA All Employee Survey Question	OCAI Question	Organizational Culture Type	Flexibility /Stability	External/Internal Focus
Managers in my facility are rule-enforcers. They expect employees to follow established rules, policies and procedures	The management style in the organization is characterized by security of employment, <u>conformity, predictability, and stability</u> in relationships (OCAI 3-d).	Hierarchy	Stability	Internal
	The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify a no-nonsense, aggressive, <u>results-oriented</u> focus (OCAI 2-c).	Market	Stability	External
Managers in my facility are coordinators and coaches. They help employees meet the facility's goals and objectives	The management style in the organization is characterized by hard-driving competitiveness, high demands, and <u>achievement</u> (OCAI 3-c).	Market	Stability	External
The glue that holds my facility together is loyalty and tradition. Commitment to this facility runs high.	<u>The glue that holds the organization together is loyalty</u> and mutual trust. <u>Commitment to this organization runs high</u> (OCAI 4-a).	Clan	Flexibility	Internal
The glue that holds my facility together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being first.	The glue that holds the organization together is <u>commitment to innovation and development</u>. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge (OCAI 4-b).	Adhocracy	Flexibility	External
The glue that holds my facility together is formal rules and policies. People feel that following the rules is important.	The glue that holds the organization together is <u>formal rules and policies</u>. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is important (OCAI 4-d).	Hierarchy	Stability	Internal
The glue that holds my facility together is the emphasis on tasks and goal accomplishment. A production orientation is commonly shared.	The glue that holds the organization together is the <u>emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment</u>. Aggressiveness and winning are common themes (OCAI 4-c).	Market	Stability	External
My facility emphasizes human resources. High cohesion and morale in the organization are important.	The organization emphasizes <u>human development</u>. High <u>trust</u>, openness, and participation persist (OCAI 5-a).	Clan	Flexibility	Internal

VA All Employee Survey Question	OCAI Question	Organizational Culture Type	Flexibility /Stability	External/Internal Focus
My facility emphasizes growth and acquiring new resources. Readiness to meet new challenges is important.	The organization emphasizes <u>acquiring new resources</u> and creating new challenges. <u>Trying new things</u> and prospecting for opportunities are valued (OCAI 5-b).	Adhocracy	Flexibility	External
My facility emphasizes permanence and stability. Keeping things the same is important.	The organization emphasizes <u>permanence and stability</u>. Efficiency, control and smooth operations are important (OCAI 5-d).	Hierarchy	Stability	Internal
My facility emphasizes competitive actions and achievement. Measurable goals are important.	The organization emphasizes <u>competitive actions and achievement</u>. Hitting stretch <u>targets</u> and winning in the marketplace are dominant (OCAI 5-c).	Market	Stability	External
Policies and procedures (P&P) in my facility are helpful because they clarify roles and responsibilities.	P&P <u>support the people</u> involved.	Clan	Flexibility	Internal
Policies and procedures in my facility help staff save time and effort.	P&P facilitate innovation.	Adhocracy	Flexibility	External
Policies and procedures in my facility represent the best way of doing things.	P&P serve as the <u>basis for operations</u>	Hierarchy	Stability	Internal
Policies and procedures in my facility are revised when they no longer work effectively.	P&P meet performance <u>goals</u> - performance focus	Market	Stability	External

Source: VA All-Employee Survey, 2011 and 2012; Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework,* 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 30-32.

APPENDIX B

IDES CROSS FUNCTIONAL PROCESS CHART
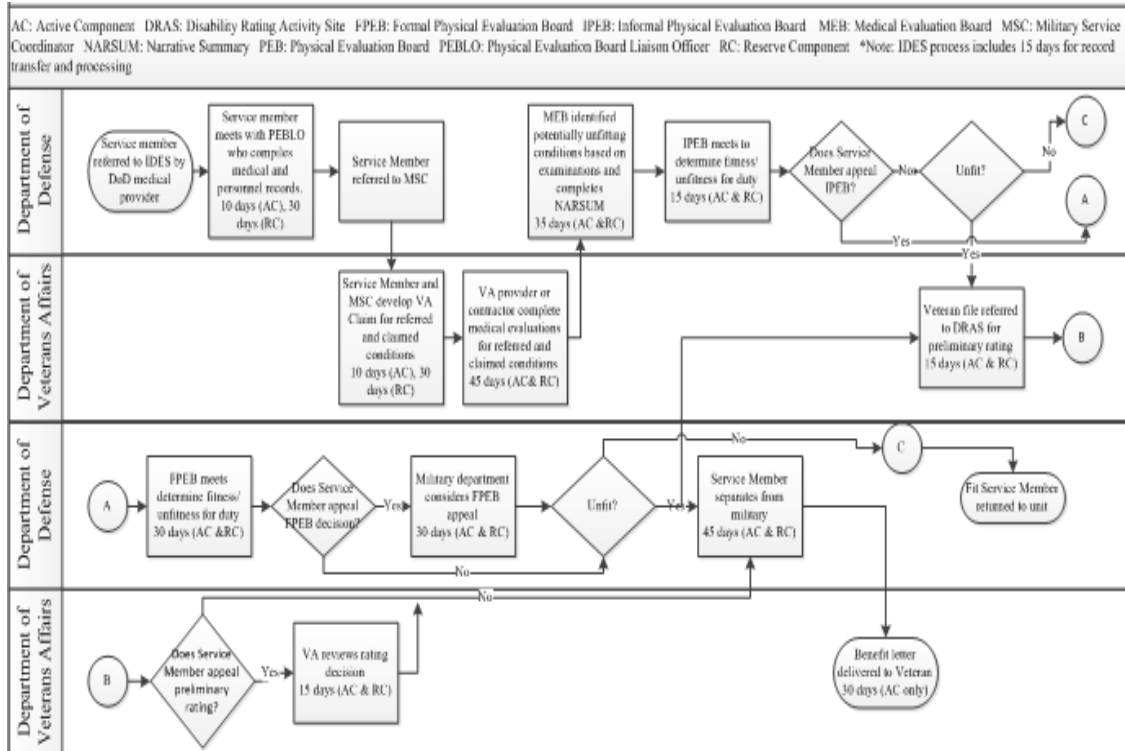
Source: Created by author.

APPENDIX C

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE SCORES BY VA ADMINISTRATION—2011

VA Organization	Clan	Adhocracy	Market	Hierarchy
VACO A	3.02	2.83	3.22	3.37
VACO B	3.09	2.90	3.22	3.30
VACO C	3.29	3.12	3.40	3.39
VBA A	2.93	2.70	3.37	3.42
VBA B	2.93	2.73	3.32	3.40
VBA C	2.96	2.71	3.34	3.41
VBA D	3.02	2.79	3.42	3.43
VHA A	3.24	3.04	3.34	3.45
VHA B	3.25	3.05	3.35	3.46
VHA C	3.17	2.96	3.28	3.41
VHA E	3.13	2.88	3.24	3.41
VHA F	3.18	2.99	3.30	3.40
VHA G	3.23	3.00	3.31	3.42
VHA H	3.19	2.99	3.30	3.43
VHA I	3.10	2.89	3.23	3.40
VHA K	3.07	2.85	3.21	3.34
VHA L	3.28	3.07	3.36	3.44
VHA M	3.23	3.02	3.31	3.41
VHA N	3.09	2.85	3.19	3.38
VHA O	3.04	2.83	3.17	3.35
VHA P	3.19	3.00	3.29	3.39
VHA Q	3.05	2.80	3.18	3.37
VHA R	3.23	2.98	3.32	3.45
VHA T	3.12	2.90	3.25	3.42
VHA U	3.07	2.86	3.19	3.37
VHA X	3.12	2.91	3.23	3.39
VHA Y	3.20	3.00	3.29	3.42
VHA Z	3.08	2.85	3.19	3.39
VA Average	3.12	2.91	3.28	3.40

Source: Created by author.

APPENDIX D

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE SCORES BY VA ADMINISTRATION—2012

VA Organization	Clan	Adhocracy	Market	Hierarchy
VACO A	3.02	2.91	3.24	3.30
VACO B	3.08	2.91	3.23	3.30
VACO C	3.22	3.03	3.32	3.36
VBA A	2.93	2.72	3.33	3.36
VBA B	2.92	2.70	3.27	3.39
VBA C	2.98	2.73	3.30	3.38
VBA D	3.02	2.80	3.38	3.41
VHA A	3.26	3.07	3.34	3.46
VHA B	3.22	3.02	3.32	3.44
VHA C	3.17	2.96	3.28	3.40
VHA E	3.12	2.87	3.23	3.39
VHA F	3.06	2.87	3.17	3.34
VHA G	3.19	2.97	3.28	3.39
VHA H	3.19	2.99	3.28	3.41
VHA I	3.07	2.85	3.20	3.39
VHA K	3.08	2.86	3.21	3.35
VHA L	3.31	3.09	3.37	3.44
VHA M	3.25	3.03	3.32	3.44
VHA N	3.05	2.82	3.14	3.34
VHA O	3.10	2.91	3.23	3.36
VHA P	3.17	3.00	3.30	3.39
VHA Q	3.03	2.77	3.13	3.37
VHA R	3.15	2.91	3.25	3.42
VHA T	3.11	2.91	3.23	3.43
VHA U	3.12	2.94	3.24	3.37
VHA X	3.11	2.89	3.21	3.38
VHA Y	3.17	2.97	3.25	3.40
VHA Z	3.09	2.87	3.20	3.39
VA Average	3.11	2.91	3.26	3.39

Source: Created by author.

STATISTICAL OUTPUTS

Anova: Single Factor

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Adhocracy	28	81.476	2.909857143	0.012327683
Clan	28	87.4825	3.124375	0.01036603
Hierarchy	28	95.19	3.399642857	0.001245646
Market	28	91.795	3.278392857	0.004770007

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	3.7514539	3	1.250484633	174.2267228	3.13952E-41	2.688691475
Within Groups	0.775152848	108	0.007177341			
Total	4.526606748	111				

Tukey HSD Post Hoc Test - 2011					
HSD_{05} = .058918	Mean	Adhocracy	Clan	Market	Hierarchy
Adhocracy	2.91	0			
Clan	3.12	0.21*	0		
Market	3.28	0.37*	0.15*	0	
Hierarchy	3.40	0.49*	0.28*	0.12*	0
*: $p<0.05$					

Scheffe Post Hoc Test - 2011						
	Adhocracy/Clan	Adhocracy/Market	Adhocracy/Hierarchy	Clan/Market	Clan/Hierarchy	Market/Hierarchy
$SS_{between}$	0.644	1.901	3.358	0.332	1.061	0.206
$MS_{between}$	0.215	0.634	1.119	0.111	0.354	0.069
$F_{comparison}$	29.921*	88.308*	155.975*	15.424*	49.267*	9.559*
$F_{critical}$	2.689	2.689	2.689	2.689	2.689	2.689
*: $p<0.05$						

ANOVA and Post-Hoc Tests—2011

Source: Created by author

Anova: Single Factor

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Adhocracy	28	81.376	2.906285714	0.010552508
Clan	28	87.1525	3.112589286	0.009232168
Hierarchy	28	94.796	3.385571429	0.001626772
Market	28	91.2275	3.258125	0.004130382

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	3.556065304	3	1.185355101	185.6335431	1.81946E-42	2.688691475
Within Groups	0.689629411	108	0.006385458			
Total	4.245694714	111				

Tukey HSD Post Hoc Test - 2012

$HSD_{.05}$=.055573	Mean	Adhocracy	Clan	Market	Hierarchy
Adhocracy	2.91	0			
Clan	3.14	0.23*	0		
Market	3.26	0.35*	0.12*	0	
Hierarchy	3.39	0.48*	0.25*	0.13*	0
*: $p<0.05$					

Scheffe Post Hoc Test - 2012

	Adhocracy/Clan	Adhocracy/Market	Adhocracy/Hierarchy	Clan/Market	Clan/Hierarchy	Market/Hierarchy
$SS_{between}$	0.596	1.733	3.216	0.297	1.043	0.227
$MS_{between}$	0.199	0.578	1.072	0.099	0.348	0.076
$F_{comparison}$	31.105*	90.470*	167.882*	15.480*	54.461*	11.871*
$F_{critical}$	2.6887	2.6887	2.6887	2.6887	2.6887	2.6887
*: $p<0.05$						

ANOVA and Post-Hoc Tests—2012

Source: Created by author.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		2011		
	Flexibility Avg	Stability Avg	External Avg.	Internal Avg.
Mean	3.005198413	3.345753968	3.07365079	3.277301587
Variance	0.011346324	0.002155195	0.00592015	0.003151205
Observations	28	28	28	28
Pearson Correlation	0.360982221		0.92613066	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0		0	
df	27		27	
t Stat	-18.08266622		-32.927718	
P(T<=t) one-tail	**6.44702E-17**		**1.2337E-23**	
t Critical one-tail	1.703288423		1.70328842	
P(T<=t) two-tail	**1.2894E-16**		**2.4674E-23**	
t Critical two-tail	2.051830493		2.05183049	

t-Test outputs for 2011 Flexibility/Stability and Internal/External Focus Mean Score

Source: Created by author.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		2012		
	Flexibility Avg	Stability Avg	External Avg	Internal Avg
Mean	2.99797619	3.328928571	3.06265873	3.264246032
Variance	0.009770009	0.001969957	0.00531928	0.003407687
Observations	28	28	28	28
Pearson Correlation	0.493173882		0.86202713	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0		0	
df	27		27	
t Stat	-20.3401459		-28.644323	
P(T<=t) one-tail	**3.32014E-18**		**4.8005E-22**	
t Critical one-tail	1.703288423		1.70328842	
P(T<=t) two-tail	**6.64029E-18**		**9.6011E-22**	
t Critical two-tail	2.051830493		2.05183049	

t-Test outputs for 2012 Flexibility/Stability and Internal/External Focus Mean Score

Source: Created by author.

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